

# Mandatory recycling



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Recycling is known to be beneficial to the environment if done on a massive scale. The question is whether or not recycling should be made mandatory. There are many benefits to recycling and there are disadvantages as well. Some benefits include reducing waste, cost effectiveness, and education of the public on the consequences we will run into if we do not recycle. One of the benefits of making recycling mandatory is that it helps lessen the waste to the environment by allowing us to use certain things again.

One of the major benefits of being able to reuse items is that non-biodegradable products can be reused or eliminated through the process of recycling. Another reason why recycling should become mandatory is that it will help us save our natural resources for when we really need to use them. If 1 ton of paper were to be recycled, up to 2 tons of trees would be saved from being used to produce more paper. It was estimated that if about half of the world's paper were to be recycled, then that would prevent us from cutting down 20 million acres of trees for paper.

Also by recycling 1 ton of paper, we are able to save 17 trees, 7,000 gallons of water, 84 gallons of oil, and 4,100 kwh of electricity. That's enough electricity to run an average American home for 6 months. All of these saved items can go to other more pressing needs. Not recycling is very similar to the tragedy of the commons as mentioned by Garrett Hardin. If we are to allow one person not to recycle, then others will follow because they see it as not being fair. This will then keep going until we eventually deplete our resources and are stuck in an irreversible state.

By making recycling mandatory we can avoid this problem all together. Although this might force some people to do something they may never have done, it's for the greater good of the Earth for us to reuse what we have already taken from it. As great as the many reasons for people to begin recycling are; a major problem is that some people do not take the time and/or they don't know how to properly recycle. Some people think that is too difficult to learn or begin to recycle. On the contrary, recycling only requires another bin to put plastic, glass, aluminum and steel products into.

Once people are educated about what can and cannot be recycled then it is as simple as putting the materials into the separate bins. If one lives in a community that supports recycling, they will be given a separate blue bin to put all of the recyclable materials. Usually the recyclables are picked up on the same day as the normal trash, so putting it out in the front yard will become habitual like putting out the trash. It would be the same as if you were not recycling because you don't have to go out of your way to recycle, someone comes and gets it and that's that.

As it has just been discussed, there are many pros at making recycling a mandatory law. However, there are just as numerous cons and seeing how recycling hasn't been made mandatory everywhere; the cons seem to outweigh the pros. The first thing that comes to mind that would present itself as a problem when it comes to making recycling mandatory is cost. It would cost the city a great deal more to recycle than to use landfills to deal with waste. In order to make recycling mandatory, the city would have to hire people to collect the recyclables, consider transportation costs, and spend money on sorting and processing said recyclables.

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Then the question comes to how to raise or find the funds to do that. One way to supplement funds to the cause is to impose fines on those that fail to comply which would undoubtedly lead to many already disgruntled citizens especially if they are not aware of how to correctly do so. This would then lead to more money needing to be spent on education for the public to learn how to properly recycle. Another con to mandatory recycling is the question of is it really more beneficial to the environment?

The idea behind “going green” is great but going back to the fact that many people are unaware of how to properly recycle; the resources and funds needed to recycle makes it moot if you bring all the “recyclables” to the Materials Recovery Facility where it’s sorted and then the stuff that isn’t recyclable needs to be loaded up again and taken to a landfill. This leads to extra pollution produced by the vehicles used to pick up recyclables as well as taking non recyclables to a landfill. The whole idea behind recycling to reduce pollution would be counterproductive in this case.

If recycling became mandatory, people could become outraged that it’s infringing on their rights to do what they want and also if the funds to support it was to come out of their own pocket. However, they need to realize that it’s not that big of a hassle as they thought it would be and maybe they will begin to see the possible benefits to our environment. Their minds will change, our futures will change, and recycling will become another one of those rituals we do during our daily lives. We need to make a change now before it becomes too late and the damages done are too great and irreversible. ?