

Recycling argumentative essay



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Recycling is one of the realities of our life. As the number of the population constantly grows people began to realize that natural resources are coming to an end. That's why instead of exploiting the nature further people started thinking about the ways of preservation of the natural resources and reduction of their use. The principles of the environment preservation are known as Three R's, namely Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. In this paper I'm mainly interested with recycling, its benefits, costs, influence on environment and economy. There are different definitions of recycling.

Generally it is defined as a process, involving taking a product when it cannot be further used and turning it again to some other usable raw material, which can be used in the production of the other product (Recycling, 2007). The other definition of recycling is “ the separation and collection of materials for processing and remanufacturing into new products, and the use of the products to complete the cycle” (Define recycling and its processes, 2007). The purpose of recycling lies in the transformation of the old already used materials into new ones.

Thus, we can say that by means of recycling we receive new materials from the old ones, which could otherway be discarded as wastes (Define recycling and its processes, 2007). Recycling plays a very important role in the environmental issues.

- The numbers show the considerable increase in the volume of recycling starting from 1999. Since that time over 64 million tons of waste material was recycled and reused. In the present time approximately 32 % of the waste is recycled in the USA, which is almost twice as much as it was some

15 years ago (Define recycling and its processes, 2007). It should also be mentioned that recycling rates are different for different materials. Thus, the paper recycling is the oldest technology and the rate for it is almost 50 %, plastic soft drink bottles are recycled in 34 % of cases, aluminum beer and soft drink cans are recycled in 45 % of cases, steel packaging in 63 % (Define recycling and its processes, 2007).

- It is also worth mentioning that 20 years ago there was only one curbside recycling program in the United States. It was used to collect several different materials at the curb. However, this technology developed rapidly and by 2005 we can witness the existence of over 9, 000 curbside programs in this country, which are applied to 500 materials recovery facilities, used for processing the collected materials (Define recycling and its processes, 2007). The whole recycling process could be roughly divided into three major steps: The first step is the collection and processing. During this step materials, subjected to recycling, are collected by means of four major methods: curbside, buy-back and drop-off centers and deposit/refund programs.

Though the methods to gather the recyclables could be quite different, the next step is usually the same – all the recyclables gathered go to the materials recovery facility, where they are sorted and prepared for further manufacturing. I'd also like to mention that recyclables are treated like a usual product – they are also bought and sold on the different prices (Recycling 2, 2007). The next step is manufacturing of recyclables. Cleaned and prepared recyclables could be manufactured either totally or partially. We can run across recycled items in different spheres of our everyday life.

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For the most part all the paper towels and newspapers are recycled, just as steel cans, aluminum, plastic, and glass soft drink containers and others. A lot of innovative technologies also make use of the recyclables, such as recovered glass in glassphalt or recovered plastic in park benches or pedestrian bridges (Recycling 2, 2007). Finally, the last step involves purchasing recycled products, which can be considered the final step of the recycling loop. Governments try in every possible way to advertise the recycled products.

Buying recycled products is extremely important. By giving preference to this type of products, people stimulate manufacturers to be more environmentally friendly and produce more recycled materials. In spite of the fact that everybody realizes that recycling is an important step to preserve the natural resources and protect the environment, still a lot of questions arise concerning this matter.

For the first time this controversy appeared in 1996 when John Tierney wrote an article for a New York Times Magazine, in which he called recycling a garbage : Mandatory recycling programs ...offer mainly short-term benefits to a few groups — politicians, public relations consultants, environmental organizations and waste handling corporations – while diverting money from genuine social and environmental problems. Recycling may be the most wasteful activity in modern America...” (Do Benefits of Recycling Outweigh the Costs? , 2007). This article raised a wave of dispute. Environmentalists argued with Tierney in a number of different aspects. On the one hand I can agree with Tierney that recycling is quite costly.

On the other hand I also support his opponents, who maintain that recycling is an essential part of the process aimed at preserving health environment. Advantages of recycling can even be proved economically. Thus, if we compare the cost of recycling and trash collection, we are sure to see that Tierney's assumption that recycling was doubling energy consumption and pollution is not quite right. The most famous environmental organizations of the USA – the Natural Resources Defense Council and Environmental Defense – make reports on the regular basis.

These reports state the benefits of recycling programs. The major benefits stated there are reduction of pollution, decrease in the use of virgin natural resources, decrease of the amount of garbage, increase of the space, which was previously used to store garbage but now can be used for other public useful purposes, reduction of the cost of garbage pick-up and disposal (Do Benefits of Recycling Outweigh the Costs? , 2007). Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Solid Waste also supports the position of the waste recycling process.

It states that: “ A well-run curbside recycling program can cost anywhere from \$50 to more than \$150 per ton...trash collection and disposal programs, on the other hand, cost anywhere from \$70 to more than \$200 per ton. This demonstrates that, while there's still room for improvements, recycling can be cost-effective” (Do Benefits of Recycling Outweigh the Costs? , 2007). However, there are cases when recycling proves to be really ineffective, like this happened in 2002 in New York City, where it was estimated that due to the much-lauded recycling program government was losing money.

Mayor Michael Bloomberg stated that: “ the benefits of recycling plastic and glass were outweighed by the price — recycling cost twice as much as disposal. Meanwhile, low demand for the materials meant that much of it was ending up in landfills anyway, despite best intentions”. In order to lower the expenses of the recycling program the city government had to refuse from recycling of glass and plastic (Do Benefits of Recycling Outweigh the Costs? , 2007). After this there appeared the other problem – storage of the glass and plastic trash.

The cost of this increased so much that later it became profitable again to recycle glass and plastic (Do Benefits of Recycling Outweigh the Costs? , 2007). Cecil Adams, reporter of Chicago Reader, is sure that the same holds for all big cities of the USA. “ Some early curbside recycling programs...waste resources due to bureaucratic overhead and duplicate trash pickups (for garbage and then again for recyclables). But the situation has improved as cities have gained experience. ” (Do Benefits of Recycling Outweigh the Costs? , 2007).

Cecil Adams is also sure that in case recycling programs are thoroughly considered, they should cost less than garbage disposal services. I believe that in any case recycling justifies expenses associated with it. In the contemporary world when the world is suffering greatly from pollution and the natural resources are coming to an end, people should be more conscientious about preserving the environment. More emphasis should be placed on the development of more progressive and elaborate recycling techniques and processes as well on the advertising the recycled products and explaining the benefits of the process to the public.