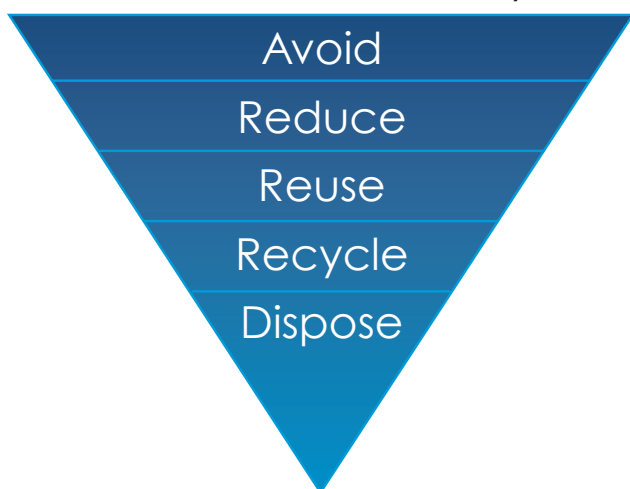


Waste avoidance

Australians generate about 690 kilograms of waste per year per person, making us the second highest generators of household waste, behind the USA.

This rate of waste production is unsustainable, and we need to rethink what we consume in order to minimise what we send to landfill each year. It is important to understand the stages of the Waste Hierarchy and how our behaviours can help reduce the amount of waste we produce. The Waste Hierarchy is a simple way of showing which areas we can focus on to reduce our waste.

The Waste Hierarchy



Let's look at these steps in more detail...

Avoid – Rethink

Whenever we shop, we buy our rubbish. So, the best way to minimise rubbish is to avoid buying certain things in the first place. Stop and think before you shop. Smart shopping can save you time and money but most importantly it can drastically reduce the amount of waste you produce.

Instead of	Why not try
✗ Plastic wrap	✓ Reusable containers with lids
✗ New books	✓ Second-hand or library books
✗ Tissues	✓ Handkerchiefs
✗ Styrofoam cups	✓ Washable cups
✗ Disposable plates & bowls	✓ Washable plates & bowls
✗ Plastic cutlery	✓ Washable cutlery
✗ Disposable batteries	✓ Rechargeable batteries
✗ Paper towels	✓ Washable tea towels
✗ Paper napkins	✓ Washable cloth napkins
✗ Disposable nappies	✓ Cloth nappies

Reduce

When you reduce the amount of waste you throw away, you save landfill space, save raw materials and natural resources such as energy and water, and save money. We can easily reduce the amount of waste we produce using some simple steps.

- Always take your own shopping bags and say 'no' to plastic bags at the supermarket
- Choose products with minimal packaging, and avoid individually wrapped products
- Buy products in reusable, refillable or recyclable packaging
- Avoid packaging fruit and vegetables in plastic bags
- Avoid disposable items such as paper serviettes, towels and tissues
- Buy long-lasting kitchen utensils, household products and clothing
- Mend broken appliances and furniture where possible
- Reduce packaging by buying in bulk
- Before you buy something, think "Do I really need it?"

Reuse

Reusing is another way of decreasing the amount of waste you throw away, which in turn decreases the volume of waste destined for landfill. In reusing a product, try and identify a long term use for the product. There are many ways to reuse things we consider unwanted or no longer useful. You can:

- Take old books, magazines and toys to hospitals, doctor's rooms, gyms, dental surgeries, schools or preschools.
- Hold a Garage Sale – your 'trash' may be another person's treasure!
- Instead of buying brand new power tools, borrow or hire the ones you might only use now and then
- Take good used clothing and household items to opportunity shops, school or church fairs
- Reuse containers such as glass jars for storage
- Take your own basket or calico bags when shopping
- Use the internet to locate someone that may be able to make use of your unwanted goods

Some ideas for reusing common household items

Consumable	Reuse options
Waste paper	Use for scrap paper – messages or shopping lists
Magazines	Drop them in to the local surgery, gym, kindergarten or hospital
Clothing	Donate them to charity or use scraps for rags
Plastic bags	Use for storage or as bin liners
Egg cartons	Use for seedling trays in the garden
Curtains or sheets	Use as rags for painting, cleaning or dusting
Toys	Donate to schools, kindergartens, hospitals or charities

Recycle

When manufacturers use recycled materials to make a new product, they use fewer natural resources and less energy than if they had used virgin or raw materials. Recycling materials is definitely a better choice than sending them to the landfill. Check with your Council to find out what is recyclable in your local area. To support recycling efforts, buy back the materials you recycle by purchasing recycled-content products.

Organic recycling

Recycling can also occur in our own backyards with a compost bin or worm farm, or even just in our gardens. By mimicking nature's recycling process of decomposition, we can unlock and recycle the nutrients of our organic waste, and process it back into our gardens. Half of what we throw away each week is food scraps and garden waste. By recycling this waste in our backyards we are saving valuable landfill space, and reducing methane gas emissions from our landfills.

Disposal

Disposal is the last option when it comes to waste management, but the one our society practices the most. Disposing of waste is an increasingly serious environmental, social and economic issue in Australia. Some of the drawbacks of disposing waste in landfill are:

- Possible groundwater pollution through the leaching of toxins
- Greenhouse gas emissions produced by the decay of waste
- Expensive set up and management costs for local councils and government agencies
- The wasting of valuable and recoverable resources. For example, the value of aluminium cans disposed of in Australia is estimated to be equivalent to \$15 million per annum
- Use of scarce urban land for landfill instead of housing and other sustainable uses

When we rethink our behaviours before purchasing and consuming items, we can avoid disposing unwanted material altogether.