



Upcycle

Educator Guide

Age Group: Any

Number of Participants: 20-30

Time Frame: 20-30 minutes

Background:

Climate change has rapidly become a topic of concern for environmental conservationists. Not only is Earth expected to heat up to 3°C in the coming decades, but scientists are predicting alterations to global weather patterns, sea level rises, and peak CO₂ concentrations. A large influencer in the Earth's health is waste - all of the discarded materials piled up in landfills. Plastics, styrofoam, clothes, and more are commonly discarded after a single use. At first glance, the future of the Earth's climate may seem bleak. However, there are a variety of ways that all of us can help!

Reduce, reuse, recycle, and refuse - four great ways everyone can help eliminate waste and protect the environment! While "reduce" involves the decision to use less of a product, "reuse" and "recycle" describe the process of turning previously used materials into new products. The more recently added R, "refuse", encourages citizens to turn down environmentally hazardous materials completely. In addition to the four R's, the practice of upcycling old materials is on the rise. While similar to recycling, upcycling involves reusing a material without degrading the quality and composition of the material (Intercon, 2010). In contrast, recycling relies on the degradation of the original material before its next use. Upcycling reduces our dependence upon greenhouse gas-emitting factories to create products, and helps clear our landfills. A decrease in global reliance upon the production of brand new materials reduces air pollution, water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, and propels the conservation of global resources.

Not only is upcycling directly beneficial to the natural environment and all organisms who call Earth home, but our health and happiness is significantly influenced by the state of the world around us. Waste, and how we choose to handle it, affects all aspects of the environment. How we choose to dispose of synthetic products influences the water, land, and air that support human life. Thus, adopting the practice of upcycling is a fun, simple method of conserving the environment that supports life.

Source: <https://intercongreen.com/2010/02/17/recycling-vs-upcycling-what-is-the-difference/>