

SCHOOLS RECYCLE RIGHT CHALLENGE

HOW TO SET UP A RECYCLING SYSTEM



**SCHOOLS
RECYCLE RIGHT**
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INTRODUCTION

About this guide

This is a step-by-step guide on how to establish a recycling system at your school.

A recycling system involves collecting recyclable materials at school and taking them to (or getting them collected by) a recycler.

Remember though, it is always better to reduce waste first, reuse where possible, and then recycle!

Why set up a recycling system?

Setting up a recycling system is a hands-on, interdisciplinary lesson that educates students about the environment, personal responsibility, community action, sustainability and natural resource management. It can easily link with the curriculums of business studies, commerce, economics, chemical sciences (what materials are made from), geography (mapping and impacts of landfill, agriculture and mining), as well as develop skills in numeracy, and critical and creative thinking. They can also provide an opportunity for the school to gain public recognition for its achievements.










Recycling can:

- Reduce the amount of waste going into a landfill, helping to prolong its useful life
- Save energy and thus greenhouse gas emissions
- Create jobs
- Save natural resources such as oil and water
- Reduce pollution
- Provide raw materials for manufacturing
- Makes a difference at local and global scales

In addition, a recycling policy can be incorporated into a School Environmental Plan (see Appendix 1). Purchasing items with recycled content could be part of a green purchasing policy (see Appendix 3). If your school needs help becoming more sustainable, see Appendix 2 for details on the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative.

GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

Setting up a recycling system is a great opportunity to get your students involved in a practical, 'real life' situation. From conducting a feasibility study of setting up a recycling program, to the ongoing management, students can contribute through:

-  Research/data gathering
-  Sharing information/reporting findings
-  Conducting a school/community education campaign
-  Debating options
-  Decision making
-  Implementing communication strategies
-  Monitoring, evaluating and modifying
-  Celebrating!
-  Creating a green team



RECOGNITION AWARDS

You may wish to consider recognition awards for outstanding individuals or classes - e.g., recycling trophies! Also remember that when you **register for the Schools Recycle Right Challenge**, we will send you a certificate for your students!

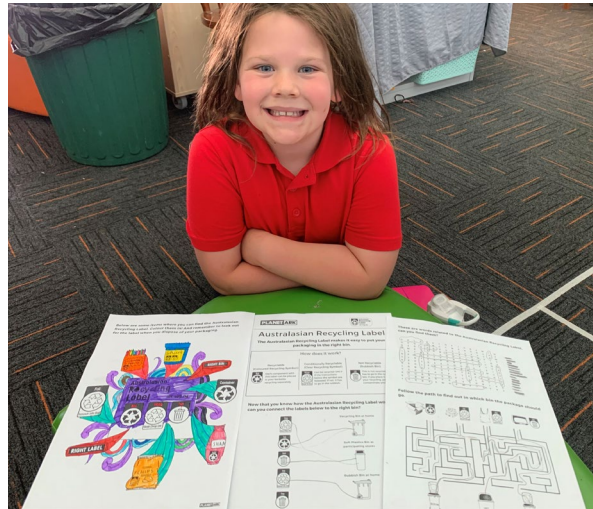
GET STUDENTS INVOLVED



Lesson Plans

Choose any of our free curriculum aligned Lesson Plans that use fun activities to teach kids about recycling and the environmental benefits that follow.

[DOWNLOAD LESSON PLANS HERE](#)



Talks/Excursions

Consider inviting an expert in recycling to talk to your class or school. Your waste management provider may be able to offer school education programs to help teachers and students understand how each product is recycled.

Alternatively, contact your local council to find out whether they can help you plan an excursion to a recycling facility.



During the Schools Recycle Right Challenge (SRR) Planet Ark offers a range of activities for schools such as live online lessons and promotional events in your area. Make sure you are signed up to our newsletters and check our events page so that you don't miss out!

[CHECK EVENTS HERE](#)

[SIGN UP TO NEWSLETTER](#)

GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

Set up a collection point

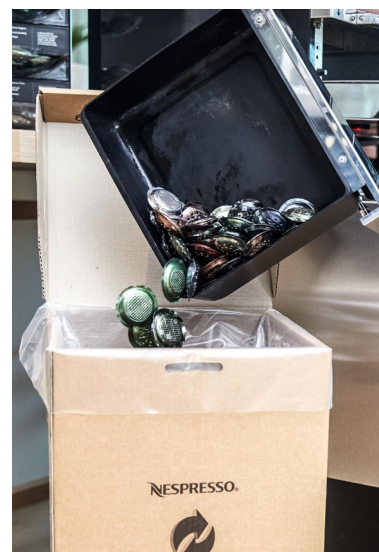
Sign up to free recycling programs. You'll receive a collection unit for the materials which will be recycled into new products:



PRINTER CARTRIDGES



MOBILE PHONES



COFFEE CAPSULES



HOT TIP!

Place your recycling units in places where the waste is generated. For example, your cartridge box next to the printers, coffee capsules box in the staff kitchen and the mobile phone unit in the foyer or common areas so that students and parents can have access to it.

[DOWNLOAD FREE SIGNAGE HERE](#)

GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

Composting

A compost or worm farm is one of nature's best recyclers of food and garden scraps. Students can get involved and see in real time how their food scraps become compost. To find out more, or to establish a compost bay or worm farm at your school, check out these resources:

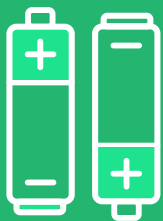
COSTA'S GUIDE TO ORGANICS FOR SCHOOLS

COMPOSTING FACT SHEET



Commercial drop-off locations

The below services have free drop off locations for small amounts, but if you have commercial quantities, you may need to contact a specialised recycler. You can find any of them on our website: businessrecycling.com.au



BATTERIES

Find drop off locations like Supermarket stores and **Officeworks**.

FIND LOCATIONS



COMPUTERS & ACCESSORIES

You can find organisations like **e-cycle** and **TechCollect**.

FIND LOCATIONS



SOFT PLASTICS

Return your soft plastics packaging to **Coles** and **Woolworths** stores participating in the REDcycle program.*

*Only small amounts of product packaging are accepted, so no large amounts of bubble wrap.

GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

Turn trash into cash with Container Deposit Schemes



You can raise funds by collecting containers that are eligible under state run Container Deposit Schemes (CDS). Eligible beverage containers can be returned to designated collection depots to earn a 10 cent refund per container.

CDS provide a financial incentive to reduce litter, leading to cleaner beaches, waterways, parks and streets, and mean less recyclable materials are sent to landfill.

Schemes are currently in place in SA, NT, NSW, QLD and WA, with VIC scheme expected to commence in early 2023. To find out more about the schemes visit:

recyclingnearyou.com.au/containerdeposit/index.cfm



GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

Conduct a waste audit

A waste audit is a great way to find out what type of waste you are generating, where you might want to focus your efforts and give you a baseline to measure any improvements.

1

Choose a day or a week to commence the audit. Audit with one class or a number of classes. Ask your students to keep all of their packaging and food scraps from recess and lunch.

2

In the classroom, place nine large containers labelled with the following categories: plastic containers, glass, milk and juice cartons, paper and cardboard, metal, squeeze pouches, chip and snack packets, plastic wrap and bags, and food scraps. On the first day, the class can work collectively to identify their packaging items and sort them into these nine categories.

3

After each recess and lunch, for the duration of the audit, ask your students to continue placing their packaging and food scraps into the correct boxes.

4

Keep a tally, or record the weight, of the items collected in each box over the week or the day. Ask the students to fill in the results on a large chart.

5

Average the number of items collected per day over the five days, then multiply by 20 to obtain a monthly estimate. You can then extrapolate this amount to calculate the waste generation rate for all the classes in the school, or convert each material type into a percentage of the total amount discarded at your school.

6

If you would like a more comprehensive picture of the waste generated by your school as a whole, select different groups of students to also assist in monitoring the waste generated in the library, computer labs and art studios, offices, the canteen and other parts of your school and repeat steps 1 to 5.*

*You may need to modify the container labels for the different materials collected, and you may need a longer audit period (e.g. a fortnight or a month) to get accurate waste generation rates for all areas of your school.

GET STUDENTS INVOLVED

Waste audit table

Below is an example table you can use for your waste audit.

ITEM	DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	TOTAL
Milk and juice cartons						
Plastic containers						
Glass						
Paper and cardboard						
Metal						
Squeeze pouches						
Chip packets						
Plastic wrap and bags						
Food scraps						
Aluminium cans						
Printer cartridges						
Computers and accessories						
Mobile phones and accessories						
Books						
Steel cans						
Fluorescent lights						
Other/miscellaneous						

IS IT FEASIBLE FOR MY SCHOOL?

Costs and benefits

There are some important considerations to take into account when evaluating the feasibility of a recycling system in your school.

Why not involve your students in the process by asking them to analyse the costs and benefits of such a system as part of a recycling lesson plan or in combination with other curriculum studies?

1. What materials can we recycle?

Many materials can be recycled, however some recycling options and services may not be available in remote locations.

Most recyclers provide co-mingled recycling bins, making it easy to recycle items we usually recycle at home like:



Paper and cardboard



Milk and juice cartons



Glass



Aluminium cans



Plastic containers



Steel cans

In addition to the free recycling programs mentioned in the section above, you can also recycle these materials through dedicated collection systems:



Food and garden scraps



Toothpaste tubes and toothbrushes



Stationery



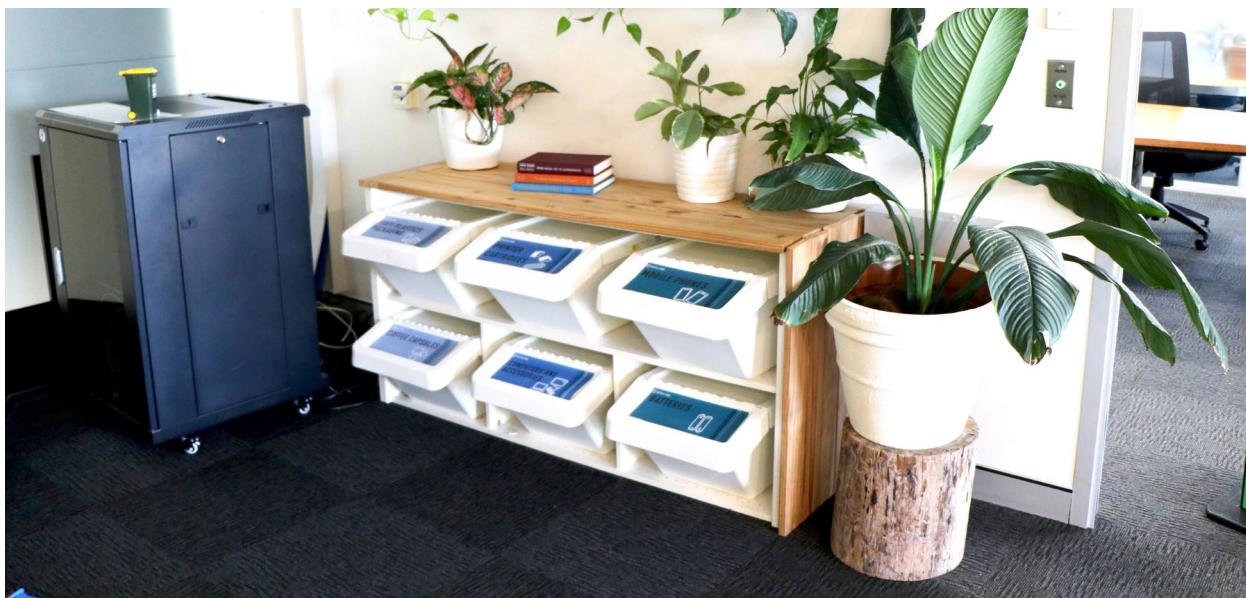
Lights (eg. fluorescent tubes)

See next page for an example Recycling & Waste Station

IS IT FEASIBLE FOR MY SCHOOL?

Example recycling station

Place your recycling station at the front of the school or an area where ALL students, teachers and parents can drop off their items.



IS IT FEASIBLE FOR MY SCHOOL?

2. How much is likely to be collected?

A collection system may only be worthwhile if your school is likely to collect a reasonable quantity of recyclable materials. If your school has previously done a waste audit, you'll be able to predict the amount of expected materials with good accuracy. If it hasn't done a waste audit before, you could conduct a waste audit with students, using the steps in the previous section as a guide. You may simply want to choose one or two materials to recycle first, and then review other materials in the future.

3. Find a recycler

If you are considering participation in only the free programs mentioned at the beginning, you can skip ahead to Transportation (step 4).

The first step in finding a recycler is to review your school's current waste management contract. Find out whether the waste removal contract can be renegotiated during the contract term, whether the company your school works with, can provide a recycling service or could expand the current service provided, and review any costs that may be incurred by changing or expanding your current waste contract.

If your current contractor can assist you in the way you want, the next step is to consider Transportation (step 4). If you decide to work with another company, or to get quotes from other recycling providers, simply search on businessrecycling.com.au for recycling services in your area.

When contacting the recycling services, ask the questions outlined in Planet Ark's **Choose the Right Recycler Checklist and Factsheet**. This will ensure you secure an environmentally and legally reputable recycling service provider.

Remember to ask for quotes for the collection of your recycling (if applicable), the recycling transportation fees (if any), and any contract management or equipment leasing expenses your school will be liable for.

IS IT FEASIBLE FOR MY SCHOOL?

4. Transportation

In the event that the school needs to transport its recycling to a drop off point, you may consider establishing a roster of volunteer staff or parents. You'll need to think about how often the recycling will need to be transported, who will coordinate the volunteers, how the recycling will be transported (e.g. inside bulka bags or cardboard boxes) and whether there are any insurance or health and safety considerations.



5. Estimating costs/savings and time required

Estimate the costs (if any) your school will incur for establishing and maintaining the recycling service including transport, equipment (e.g. bins), storage facilities, as well as the time needed for students and staff to implement the system.

Discuss with your principal whether any funds can be allocated to the program. Consider highlighting the potential for waste minimisation initiatives to save the school money by reducing waste disposal expenses, as well as the environmental benefits and linkages to the curriculum. Reducing paper usage not only saves money, but also reduces landfill use.



IS IT FEASIBLE FOR MY SCHOOL?

6. Collecting and sorting each material

The best way to collect and store recyclable items will differ from school to school. Things to consider include:

- 1. Location of collection receptacle** – as mentioned above, locations like the school canteen or a well-frequented, covered area in the playground are a great choice. Involve your students, by asking them to map the school and suggest recycling collection points as a lesson in local geography.
- 2. Type of collection receptacle** – will it be outdoors or indoors, big or small, secured or unsecured? Will it need wheels? Whichever type of container you choose, it will need to be easy to remove the items from the container when the recycler collects them, or when they are emptied for transport to the recycler.
- 3. Who will be responsible for monitoring and emptying the collection receptacle?** Can students take responsibility as part of the school's sustainability program or the Student Representative Council? If not, your school's cleaners, groundskeeper, or rostered volunteers (if you have them) may need to regularly empty smaller collection containers into a single, large container for collection by the school's recycling contractor.
- 4. Any health and safety issues that need to be addressed.** Assess any OH&S risks that may arise from your proposed recycling program and discuss these with your school principal before you begin.
- 5. Ensure you have effective signage at the collection points** (see Step 8 for further information).



IS IT FEASIBLE FOR MY SCHOOL?

7. Goals, record-keeping and reporting

Set a recycling goal based on your original waste audit results. Ensure your goals are measurable, achievable, and time-bound. Keeping records of any the costs incurred by your recycling program, and reviewing the frequency of collections / drop off trips will help to determine if what you have in place is appropriate for the amount being recycled.

Decide early on whether other data should be collected for a thorough assessment of the program. For example, you may wish to monitor and record the number of wheelie bins / skips of recycling that are collected, compared to the amount filled with rubbish. You may also decide to include records of information sessions and conversations with students and teachers about the new programs and how it works, or even their level of awareness of, and participation in, the new program.

Use this data to evaluate your achievements in relation to your goals. You will then be able to review the effectiveness of your program, make any improvements or adjustments to the way the program works, and to establish new goals for the program in the future.



IS IT FEASIBLE FOR MY SCHOOL?

8. Building support, awareness and participation

Once your school has established its collection system, it's important to build awareness amongst students, staff, parents and perhaps even the local community. School assemblies, day sheets, school newsletters and signage can all help with communicating your message within the school community.

When staff and students understand how a recycling system can benefit both the school and the environment, they are more likely to support and participate in the scheme, and less likely to contaminate the collection with other waste materials.

Designing signs can be a class activity if you would like to have tailored signs and posters for your school. Alternatively, you can download signs as PDFs for printing from Planet Ark.



[DOWNLOAD FREE
SIGNAGE HERE](#)




Communicating the success of your recycling program to staff and students is also important, as it will show that their actions are leading to worthwhile results. Where possible, encourage your students to initiate these communication and feedback mechanisms by reporting in:

 Newsletters

 Annual Reports

 Special noticeboards

 School homepage

 Speech nights

 Progress charts

USEFUL RESOURCES

Planet Ark's Schools Recycle Right Challenge (SRRC) provides free recycling activity guides, lesson plans and events ideas for Australian schools. The resources have been designed to engage students and teachers to learn by doing and learn by having fun!

[ACCESS SRRC RESOURCES HERE](#)

Recycling Near You (RNY) provides information on community reuse organisations that offer excellent opportunities to reuse resources.

[VISIT RECYCLING NEAR YOU](#)



GET IN TOUCH

Contact the National Recycling Week team



(02) 8484 7200



nationalrecyclingweek.com.au



enquiries@planetark.org



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#SRRC
#NationalRecyclingWeek



APPENDIX

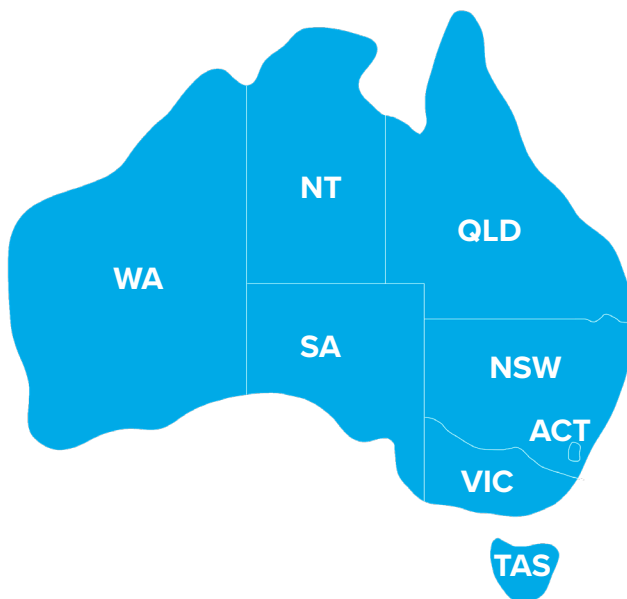
Appendix 1: Establishing a Recycling Policy

Establishing a recycling system and policy, and incorporating it into an integrated School Environmental Management Plan (SEMP), can embed recycling and sustainability in the culture of a school.

A SEMP is a document that sets out the school community's intentions in regard to environmental education and environmental management. A SEMP helps to integrate environmental considerations into whole-of-school planning. Evaluations of school waste reduction programs indicate that success in achieving waste management outcomes occurs when schools adopt a whole-of-school approach.

Appendix 2: Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative

Each school can participate within each state's network, which explores the sustainability of school operations, supports the integration of sustainability into learning programs, and facilitates recognition of achievement. Individual schools may choose to focus on certain areas that are of most relevance and interest to their school community.



Click on your state or territory to find out what resources and networks are available.



APPENDIX

Appendix 3: Green Purchasing

Buying items made from recycled materials closes the loop for resources. It helps to maintain a high demand for recyclables, and therefore for community recycling programs. Green or sustainable purchasing will help to support products with a lower environmental impact.



Using locally made recycled paper is a simple and positive thing your school can do for the planet. **Check out all the facts about making the switch to Planet Ark Paper.**



Some other products that can be targeted include:

- Refillable or recycled pens
- Recycled ink
- Rechargeable batteries
- Recycled notepads
- Recycled benches/ playgrounds