

Chapter 22

Conserving Resources

Earth-Friendly Shopping

Directions: Read the following selection. Then answer the questions under *Thinking Critically*, and complete the activities as directed by your teacher.

Laura Kreitler recently conducted a workshop for a Youth Environmental Summit in Ohio. Previously, she had made other presentations at international gatherings of young environmentalists. Most of the young people attending her workshop were already recycling everything possible. However, Laura pointed out to them that reducing the amount of waste they produce is even better for the environment. Her message stated that although recycling is important, there are ways to cut back on the amount of garbage people create so that the need to recycle is not as great.

As Laura explained, recycling goods, while better than manufacturing them from raw material, consumes energy and creates pollution. In addition, materials taken to recycling centers sometimes end up in landfills if the recycler cannot find manufacturers to buy them.

The following principles can serve as guides for earth-friendly shopping for packed lunches or home provisions.

- ◆ First, avoid buying products in single-serving containers. Examples of single-serving containers often used in packed lunches include boxes or cans of juice and packages of chips, nuts, or dried fruit. Instead, she suggested buying juice, nuts, dried fruit, and other lunch items in larger packages and packing them in reusable containers.
- ◆ Think about the number of products you can buy for home or for school that come in single-serving packages: beverages, cereals, soups, raisins, cookies, nuts, pretzels, or frozen dinners. The next time you are in a store, compare the amount of cereal in the largest size box with the amount in a single-serving container. Next, count the number of single-serving boxes you would need to buy to obtain as much cereal as the large box contains.

- ◆ Compare both the cost and the amount of waste created. If you buy the largest can, bottle, or jar, you will create less waste, save energy, and create less pollution.
- ◆ Reusing food packaging is even better than recycling it. If, for example, you wash a plastic salsa container, you can use it to pack food for lunch or store food at home, instead of buying plastic food storage containers or plastic bags. Instead of buying lunch bags, pack your lunch in reusable containers. Your textbook also recommends this option.
- ◆ Your textbook suggests that you should choose the brands of food with the least packaging. If you also write to the manufacturers of the brands you choose and the brands you do not choose, and tell them that you consider the amount of packaging excessive, you will encourage manufacturers to reduce the packaging they use.
Because recycling is important and should not be done away with completely, Laura recommended choosing foods in recyclable rather than disposable containers. Equally important, she says, is looking for products and packaging made from recycled materials. Be certain to tell the manufacturers why you did not select their products. The more incentive you, the consumer, provide for the manufacturers, the more they will use recycled materials. They want your business.

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Thinking Critically

1. Given that disposable items, such as sandwich bags and plastic wrap, are disruptive to the environment, why do you think they are so widely used?

2. What are some disadvantages that might discourage students from using reusable containers for packed lunches?

3. If your area was experiencing a drought, would it be better to choose disposable or washable items to prepare, serve, store, or carry food? Explain.

4. Describe the consequences that might occur if everybody recycled but few people bought products made from or packaged in recycled materials.

For Further Study

- ◆ Visit a store, and compare the prices of single-serving and large packages as suggested in the article. Summarize your findings in a brief report and submit it to your teacher.
- ◆ Conduct research to find out if all materials taken to recycling centers in your area are actually purchased by manufacturers. If not, which products are in least demand? What can you do to increase demand for these products? Summarize your findings in a brief report to share with the class.
- ◆ If your community does not have a curbside recycling option, write to officials in your local government and suggest that they provide this recycling option.