



GreenTip

How Do You Measure Up?

Back to School With the 3 R's: Reduce – Reuse - Recycle

Back to school is a shopping season rivaled only by the Christmas holidays. Students need everything from new fall clothes and shoes to school supplies and electronics. As you begin to think about your back-to-school needs, remember to think about the impact your purchases will have on our environment.



School Clothes:

How can clothes be “green?” Well, clothing made from natural fibers, like cotton and wool, are a good start. They allow manufacturers to use renewable resources instead of relying on petroleum-based fabrics like nylon and polyester. But keep in mind that more and more clothing manufacturers are incorporating recycled materials into their products too. For example, some jeans makers use recycled buttons and zippers along with organic cotton and natural dyes. Also, some manufacturers of fleece jackets recycle plastic bottles to create their fleece fabric. Because of the demand for green clothes, many manufacturers are now advertising their “green” side. Look for labels that indicate recycled and natural content. And don’t forget to recycle your old clothes and shoes by donating them.

School Supplies:

School supplies are an easy opportunity for “green” shopping. Look for all types of paper, notebooks, pens and pencils and even scissors that are made from recycled materials. Scan the store shelves for less toxic alternatives to traditional glues and crayons, and watch for materials printed with soy-based inks. When you buy computer equipment and electronics, look for the EnergyStar label to take advantage of products that use less energy. There are lots of nifty new gadgets on the market this year too. You can even find backpacks that use solar panels to charge your iPods and cell phones!



<http://www.energystar.gov/>

Waste-Free Lunches:

If packing lunch is part of your school day, think about eliminating the “throw-aways,” like paper lunch bags, plastic bags and paper napkins. Substitute a cool lunch box with your person fabric napkin, and put snacks and sandwiches into reusable plastic containers. If you pack a drink, a reusable bottle or thermos, filled from a large container in the frig at home, eliminates disposable juice boxes. Remember, plastic and glass bottles and aluminum and steel cans are recyclable. So if you choose individual servings of drinks or other foods, be sure to recycle the empty containers!

Transportation:

If you ride the bus to school, you’re already taking advantage of the fuel savings that result from mass transit. If you’re dropped off or ride to school on your own, why not try carpooling? There are probably lots of other students in the neighborhood that are going to the same place at the same time as you are. Carpooling saves lots of energy and eliminates large volumes of greenhouse gases and other pollutants from being released into the atmosphere.

Dorm Furnishings:

If back-to-school means moving into a dorm room, consider eco-furnishings and house wares! Check out your attic for unused pieces to reuse for a zero environmental impact. You can also buy previously used desks, chairs, tables, lamps, even mini-frigs at your local thrift store. When you do need to purchase new furniture, consider items made from easily renewable resources like bamboo to help reduce your carbon footprint.

