Module: Reduce

Introduction

Manufacturing and transporting new products can require a significant amount of energy, natural resources, and money. In addition, there are financial and environmental costs required to transport and process these products once we no longer want them. In this module, students will learn about Reduce, the second "R" in the Region's Waste Management Hierarchy. Reducing the amount of waste that we create decreases the amount of waste that needs to be managed and/or requires disposal – protecting the environment and our community.

Learning Objectives

1. Define Reduce
2. Illustrate where Reduce falls within the Region's Waste Management Hierarchy
3. Explain the benefits of reduce practices
4. Describe reduce options and provide examples

Resource Materials (located in the resource folder)

Videos:

- Durham Region's five "Rs"
- Food Waste Prevention Playlist
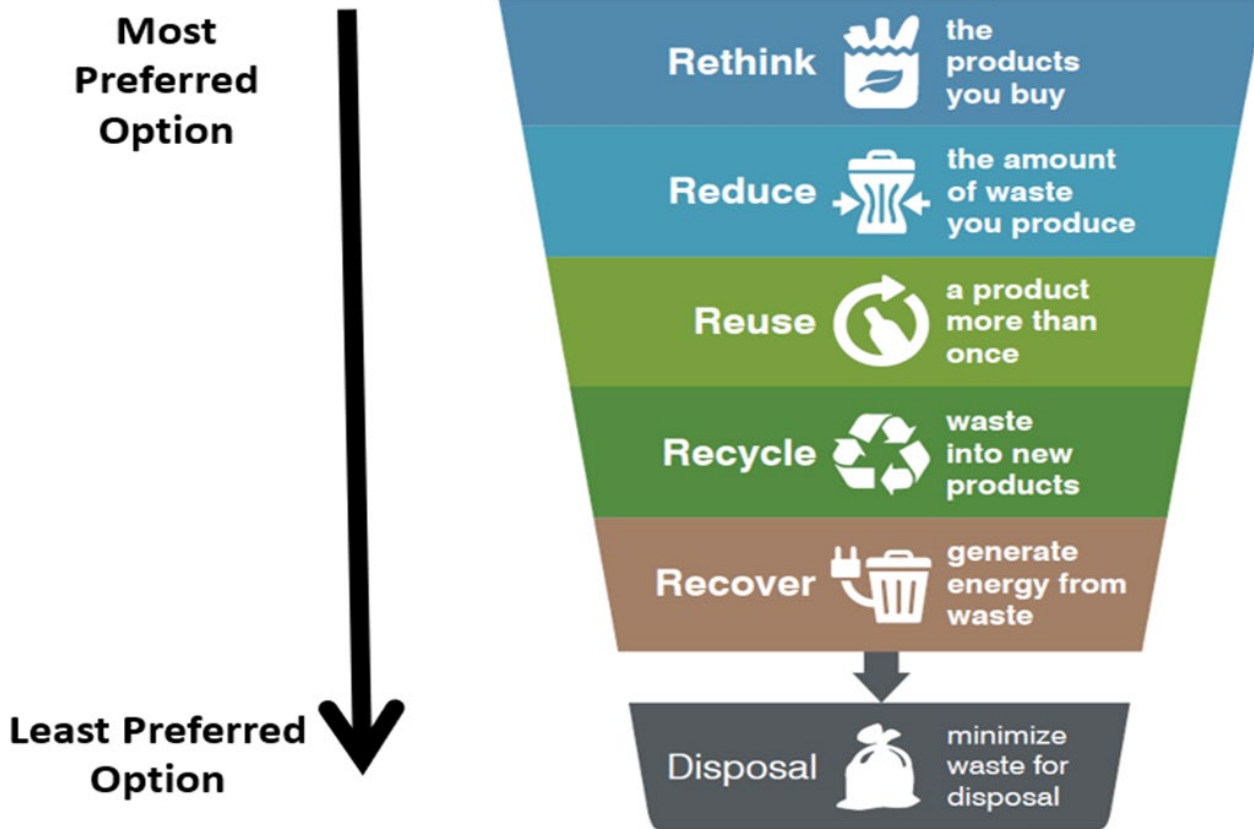- Reduce
- Circular Economy

Infographics:

- 5Rs in the Waste Hierarchy
- What is a circular economy?

What is Reduce?

Waste reduction is about minimizing waste at the source - decreasing or eliminating waste by reducing the number of products we produce and purchase. Reducing waste requires planning and making decisions about what we purchase with waste reduction in mind. Examples of waste reduction include drinking municipal tap water instead of bottled water, buying in bulk instead of purchasing single-serve products, and meal planning to reduce food waste.

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5Rs in the waste hierarchy

Most Preferred Option

Least Preferred Option

Rethink — the products you buy

Reduce — the amount of waste you produce

Reuse — a product more than once

Recycle — waste into new products

Recover — generate energy from waste

Disposal — minimize waste for disposal

What are the benefits of waste reduction?

The easiest, most economical, sustainable, and environmental sound way of managing waste is to not create it in the first place.

Reducing waste:

- Increases the security of the supply of natural resources by decreasing the need to harvest and process new raw materials
- Reduces pressure on the environment by decreasing or eliminating activities related to consumer goods such as resources extraction, transportation, processing, and disposal
- Delays the need to purchase new equipment and expand waste management infrastructure
- Saves energy and money

Reduce practices

Remembering to reduce waste can take some practice. This includes buying only what we need, refusing items we don't need, avoiding wasteful and unnecessary products and packaging, and changing how we consume products. Our purchasing decisions have the power to effect change related to how products are designed, packaged, and marketed.

Some ideas to reduce waste include:

- Avoid unnecessary products
- Drink municipal tap water instead of bottled water
- Meal plan to avoid food waste
- Portion out fresh fruit, vegetables, crackers, and other snacks into reusable containers to avoid individual pre-packaged items
- Swap out single-use disposable items for reusable items
- Say 'no' to items like straws, disposable utensils, and extra napkins

It is also important to remember that many items you choose to part with may still hold value to others. Before throwing items away, consider what other options are available in your area. Visit the Region's module on the second "R" – Reuse - for more information.

Conclusion

Before purchasing an item, consider if the purchase is necessary, how the product will be used, and if there is an alternative option available that will reduce or eliminate the need for the item's future disposal. By becoming more aware of the amount of waste we create, and by making informed decisions about the products we purchase, we can work towards making a positive impact on our planet and its future – reducing waste before it is even created.

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