**Recycling Facts For Kids**

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As a kid you enjoyed learning facts and figures because it gave you something to talk about to your friends and family.  Well, here are some really fun facts for your kids about recycling that they will find absolutely amazing – and you too!

**Plastics**

In the United States alone there are 4 million plastic bottles used every hour.  And of those 4 million plastic bottles roughly 25 percent of them get recycled. In 2011, over 3 tons were washed up on the shores on the United State.  That still doesn’t account for the plastic that is still floating out there.

By other way of interesting recycling facts for kids is that plastics are in everyday items (recycled of course) we use.  Their pencils for school, pens, erasers, watches, and even their backpacks have plastic in it. Thanks in part to recycling, this is made possible. Pretty cool, huh?

**Metal**

Metal is pretty cool (no pun intended).  Metal is the easiest “element” to recycle and it is used in everything.  From tin cans to car parts, you can find metal that is recycled from something or another.  Over 80 tons of metal are scrapped each year and they all go into the recycling yards.  Basically metal is melted down and poured into molds.  Now that is cool.  You can’t argue with how cool that is because you’re essentially taking a solid object, making it liquid, then shaping it back up.  Recycling at its best.

**Paper**

This is the most common recycled product.  Paper recycling helps reduce air pollution by 74 percent and 35 percent less water pollution.  Every ton of paper that is recycled saves 17 trees, 463 gallons of oil, and saves 5 yards of landfill space.

Paper is also the cheapest product to recycle because it is so quickly and easily made.  The average American family wastes 150 pounds of paper a year. That does not make its way into the recycle bin.

**Glass**

Glass is like metal. It can be recycled over and over and over again. Most “glass” products that you use are really only a quarter actual glass.  It’s amazing because glass isn’t malleable – just highly liquefiable.

Of course there are a lot of other interesting and fun facts about recycling.  No matter how interesting the fact is, we still have to recycle for the betterment of our environment. You will find it satisfying and rewarding.

Even as adults we don’t follow through on our responsibility to recycle.  But where it is dangerous is that our futures are so dependent on it but it’s not on the forefront of our minds.  Our children are our future, but it is also their future.  There are many recycling activities that kids can take part of – but they should know the importance and results of recycling.  Being educated as a child is first and foremost important. Here are some leading facts about recycling for kids.

* Saving Space in Landfills – Garbage can take up a lot of space in landfills.  Having too much waste in these landfills is dangerous for the environment and it is especially dangerous to the wildlife that exists in the area. Wildlife can go into landfills taking items like plastic, aluminum and rubber – to dangerous results. This should never happen and we should always have the best interests of our environment in mind.
* Energy Saving – Recycling also reduces pollution but it allows us to save energy.  Saving energy is going to be important in the upcoming years as it will be undetermined how much energy we can rely on.  Today it is taken for granted.  No one knows where our energy will be coming from in the future.  But options are being explored.
* Pollution Reduction – Yes, even the air and water is affected by how much we recycle.  Recycling does help with reducing the amounts of waste that we experience on a daily basis.  Reducing our pollution will provide healthier lives, allowing us to live a much more quality of life.

These are only a few facts about recycling.  The recycling facts for kids are being more and more ingrained into them at young ages, but it is important to note that recycling can take place for any age, under any circumstance.  Common recyclable items are: aluminum, rubber, plastic, batteries, metal, thermometers, pots and pans, and Styrofoam.  All of these items exist in our environment in some capacity – and they are in our homes.  Undoubtedly there is something in our homes that is recyclable but if you have any question as to what it is, don’t hesitate to ask someone.

Rest assured that no matter where you live there is a recycling center nearby.  Recycling is a key component to saving our environment and saving our resources.  The effects of it are subtle, but it all has a nice payoff in the end. Our world depends on it. It is never too late to get started.

**Keep it in the Garden…**

A little lesser known or thought of practice of recycling is, you guessed it, composting for your garden.  I can’t think of a single child I know who doesn’t like to get dirty, if only to get under their parents skin.  Composting will teach a child about the true nature of recycling, the natural cycle of life and death.  Much study is involved with proper composting so here we have another opportunity to strengthen and sharpen their minds.  Mom can help with saving the high carbon items needed such as additive free papers, wood ash and dried leaves while Dad teaches how to gather high nitrogen items like vegetable scraps from last year’s garden, farm manure if it is readily available, lawn clippings and weeds.  And of course, kids just love to gather weeds.

The more that we get by outdated concepts like the “25% is the most we can hope to recycle” idea, that landfills are more cost-effective and sound that recycling centers, that landfills create more jobs and security in non-urban areas…the more important it becomes for us to teach our children the truth of these matters and get them on the right track towards a healthier, happier, more productive environment.  And thankfully, the more they practice these ideas on the outside, the more they will reshape themselves on the inside.

**Keeping it fun..**

Glass and tin are materials that can be recycled with a lesson.  Glass is especially fun to recycle with very young children because it must be differentiated by color.  And as we know, all children love playing with color.  Tin recycling allows for a little more of what would be considered typical childlike fun because all labels must be removed before this type of can will be able to go to a center.  So let them get creative in the way they destroy those labels.  Any mess made is just another way to demonstrate strong work ethics to your children.

Plastic recycling is a great way to introduce older children to recycling on a bit of a different level.  Once they become familiar with the number codes that we all know and love, they will be able to decide what can be kept for home use and what needs to be sent to a center.  A deeper knowledge of plastic codes will not only demonstrate their various applications but will also teach a young child about the potential impact these various plastics will have on our environment.

**Paper, Paper, Paper**

Now we get to paper, which is a blast for young kids because it is –everywhere- and comes in so many, many forms.  More often than not, recycling of paper materials will begin at home as a chance to use the paper in ways far different than it was intended for.  Of course, we all know about the cardboard box fort.  When your buy a new refrigerator, washing machine, dryer, or any other large size item, give your kids a shot at building a castle or maybe even the dreaded “hamster tube” that runs the entire length of your house.  Don’t worry though, this is a great way to not only find a second use before the boxes are shipped out but also allow the child to develop 3 dimensional artistic skills.  Who knows, your young recycler may end up an environmental architect.  While it might be the future, we are certainly in short supply today.

Newspapers and milk cartons are great source as well.  A little known fact about a milk carton is that after recycling one single liter size carton could produce up to 5 sheets of paper.  Newspapers and silly putty can be a busy parent’s best friend and paper grocery bags are just as useful.  Both allow, again, for a child to express their artistic side while also learning a respect for the world around them.

 “…the children are the future. Teach them well and let them lead the way.”  This classic sung best by Whitney Houston has quite a message behind it.  One of the most important lessons that we can pass on to our children and future generations is the understanding and respect of our environment.  The simplest way to get a child started early on is right in your own house.   Teach them to recycle!  Many parents may look at this as an extra hassle.  In fact, it is a way to bond with your children over something very important while teaching them the beginnings of a healthy respect for our world and the habitat we live in.  With the right instruction mixed with a lot of love, our children may grow up to be anything from recycler to local environmental activist.

**Where to start…**

There are so many materials that we use on a daily basis that can be recycled.  Teaching your child about these products and how to properly dispose of them will drastically change the “footprint” they leave on the planet as they grow into adulthood.  Games such as “Name that material”, or recycling cans set up as basketball hoops can lead to hours of fun with something that otherwise could be considered boring and tedious.  Of course in a child’s mind this translates to “chores.”

Aluminum cans abound and are the most widely recycled of all consumer containers.  Aluminum tends to bring in quite a bit of money at recycling centers leaving parents the option of teaching their children a work ethic and respect for the dollar.  Cans are often donated to non-profit organizations which may provide an avenue to help the child grasp concepts such as sharing, giving, empathy for others, and the joy that comes from giving to someone in need.  Because the centers rely on the consumer / collector to bring the cans to them in suitable condition, our children and we must do our part to ensure that the cans are in a decent condition to be recycled.  After all, a smaller receiving center may be put out of business if the larger processing plants they sell to reject their contract because of “cheater cans” that contain water or rocks crushed in with the load.  Therefore, the onus is one the parent to teach honesty in the way we recycle.  The point is that recycling is the reward in itself while and monetary compensation is simply a bonus to be enjoyed; an instant karma if you will.

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