

Theme for 2024

Trash to Treasure



Upcycling or “creative reuse” is the process of using trash or unwanted products in a new way, giving them a second chance. For example, after you use the pasta sauce in a glass jar, you can clean the jar and use it as a pencil holder or cup. The possibilities are endless with upcycling. It not only benefits your community and the environment, but also your future!

Is reuse better than recycling?

Reusing and recycling are both very similar processes that give materials a second chance to become something new and help save our planet. However, reusing a material uses less energy than recycling which is better for the planet. Think about what happens after you put something into a recycle bin: A truck comes to pick it up, the truck brings it to the recycling center, where it is sorted by humans or robots, and then the material is made into a new product. That’s a long process! With reuse you already have the item in your possession and it takes less energy to make it a new product.

What are ways I can upcycle at home or in school?

Upcycling can be fun for you to do at home or at your school. You can use what you already have to upcycle. No need to buy anything! You can upcycle something into a new creative way or as a replacement for something you use everyday. Replacing something you would buy with something you reuse is a great way to upcycle. The image below has some examples of upcycling to give you some inspiration.

Can you think of something that is trash that could be turned into treasure?

Use materials to actually create your idea or draw it to make it possible!



Please use the additional resources on the next page to help students learn more about reuse and to create a lesson around it!

Talking Points for Teachers on Upcycling & Reuse

Did you know that most materials in your home and school, including the materials used to build them, can be reused or upcycled instead of being thrown away. What do you know about upcycling?

- Do you creatively reuse something in your home or at school?
- Do you have any reuse stores in your community? These are stores that give materials a second chance to be used. Some common items found at these stores are clothes, art supplies, furniture, and building materials. See the list we have provided below to find a store in your area.
- Can you think of a way to upcycle a material in your classroom or home in an everyday way?
- Can you think of a way to upcycle a material in your classroom or home in a creative way?

What are the benefits of upcycling?

- **Reduces the amount of waste going to the landfill.** Landfills have a limited lifetime. By reducing the amount of things we send to the landfill, we can extend the life of our landfills, saving space for future generations.
- **Reduces greenhouse gas emissions.** By reusing what you already have, you can help to reduce the amount of energy and emissions created from producing new products and from disposing of old ones.
- **Helps to conserve natural resources.** The things you buy at the store use natural resources from our planet to become something new. We can reduce our impact on our planet by using what we already have to make something new that we need.
- **Supports small businesses & innovations.** Many people have been able to develop a small business by creating and selling upcycled products.
- **Creates unique, new products.** Upcycling is great for shoppers because it creates unique, one of a kind products that are different from what you can find at the store.

The power of reducing AND reusing!

Reducing is the first step you can take to protect our planet. By using what you already have, fixing broken things, or turning something old into something new, you accomplish two things that will help reduce your impact on our planet!

Businesses built around reuse and upcycling

Businesses that have a focus on reuse and upcycling are continuing to gain traction and pop up in communities around Colorado and online. With more people wanting to do the right thing, these stores or online shops make it easy to do so and you support local and small businesses as well.

Some people upcycle clothing, silverware, and household decorations to make new art. You can find these folks online or at craft fairs which are fun ways to engage with artists in your community.

The most common business that you have probably heard of is reuse stores or thrift stores. While these stores do not always turn products into something new for you to buy, they are a great way to get materials back to someone to buy and reuse it instead of it going to the landfill. Thrift stores, flea markets, and antiques shops are great places to find clothing, furniture, household items and vintage things.

Did you know that there are craft and building supply thrift stores in Colorado? Crafting thrift stores are a great resource for teachers and students to get materials for their classrooms and projects. Most supplies are sold at a discounted rate too! Building material reuse stores are great options for families looking to reduce their impact when making renovations or building something.

Donating to a reuse or thrift store is super easy. First, find the items you would like to donate and have an adult help you load them up to bring to the store. Make sure your items are not broken, stained, torn, or have a ton of damage. Have an adult help you bring your items to the store and locate the “Donation Drop Off” area. These are usually near the back or on the side of the building. Have an adult or worker help you unload your items. They will let you know if they can or cannot accept certain items. Once you are done you can receive a receipt for your donation if you would like, otherwise you are all set!

Refill stores and bulk refill stations are popping up around Colorado and in your local grocery stores. They are a fun new way to shop. A refill store allows customers to bring in their own containers to fill them up with food and other household products. This is a great way to help eliminate single use packaging and to reuse containers that you may have. Every refill store offers different things to buy and fill up on. Some offer spices, noodles, nuts and snack foods, coffee and tea, body care, pet supplies, cleaning supplies, baking supplies, and much more. **If every American purchased coffee from bulk bins, we could divert 260 million pounds of just coffee packaging from landfill each year!**

The first time you go to a refill store, be sure to ask the worker how it works so they can walk you through how to refill in their store. Typically you bring in your container and weigh it at their weigh station. You can write the weight of your container down on a piece of paper or on a sticker to put on your container. Then go and fill up your container with only ONE item per container. Repeat this for multiple products and containers. Once you are done, bring your full containers and their original weights up to checkout.

You can also find bulk sections at everyday grocery stores such as King Soopers and Sprouts! Simply bring your own container (make sure to weigh it first) and fill up on everyday pantry staples such as rice, oats, nuts, freshly ground nut butters, and much more. This eliminates packaging waste and enables you to upcycle old containers such as pasta jars and jam jars.

Reuse Stores in Colorado

Craft & Art Supply Thrift Stores	Reuse Stores in Colorado for clothing, furniture, & building materials	Refill or Bulk Stores for food, body care, household products & pet care
• Hidden Treasure 2 in Longmont (Closing soon) • Art Parts in Boulder • Who Gives a Scrap in Colorado Springs • The Craft Box in Wheat Ridge • ReCreative in Denver	• Resource Central in Boulder • Motherlode Mercantile in Aspen • Arc Thrift Stores • Goodwill Thrift Stores • Salvation Army Thrift Store • Habitat for Humanity • Boulder Sports Recycler in Boulder • Play It Again Sports • Local Thrift Stores	• Simply Bulk in Longmont • Fox Den for coffee in Fort Collins • Nude Foods in Boulder • Hygge Habit in Fort Collins • The Source Zero in Berthoud • Joy Fill in Denver • New Way Refillery in Grand Junction • Conscious Living in Colorado Springs • Bulk Sections at: ○ Natural Grocers ○ Lucky’s Market ○ Sprouts ○ King Soopers ○ Whole Foods
Upcycling Maker Spaces		
• Breck Create Precious Plastics • Art Spot in Silverthorne • BLDG61 Boulder Makerspace		

What are some creative examples of upcycling?

Clothing, Furniture & Jewelry

- Patch holes in clothing - <https://remake.world/stories/style/how-to-mend-your-clothes-during-quarantine-5-easy-stitch-fixes/>
- Add color using paint, glitter, or patches
- Remake an old blanket into a cool sweater - <https://www.instagram.com/upcyclex/>
- Mile High Workshop reusable bag - <https://www.milehighworkshop.org/banner>
- Jewelry made from recycled skis - apresskijewelry.com/
- Use silverware to make a ring or necklace - <https://themerrythought.com/diy/how-to-make-spoon-rings/>
- Gather bread clips to make earrings
- Turn old T-shirts into a memory quilt
- Make a potholder out of old newspaper
- Make pillowcases out of old sweaters
- Make a rug out of old t-shirts - <https://www.thecountrychiccottage.net/t-shirt-rag-rug-using-hula-hoop-from/>

Modern Art

- Statue made from upcycled bike parts - fcgov.com/artspublic/gallery?view=up-cy-clone
- Troll Statue made from upcycled pallets in Colorado - cpr.org/2023/08/03/troll-recycled-sculpture-victor-colorado/
- Party bead unicorn by Colorado artist - summitdaily.com/news/artist-calder-kamin-makes-sculptures-out-of-recycled-summit-county-waste/
- Art made from materials found at Recreative in Denver - recreativedenver.org/blog/2022/4/28/3-local-artists-who-are-helping-the-environment-through-their-art
- Famous art made from recycled materials - blog.artsper.com/en/get-inspired/top-10-of-recycled-art/

Additional resources to use in your classroom

Activities for kids

- Upcycling an old T-shirt into a tote bag - youtu.be/q2ZP5AuK6VA?si=uH2vGLOAJvf8bkbU
- Upcycling Ideas Music Video - youtube.com/watch?v=Xs_HbZO8lOQ
- PBS Kids Upcycle Ideas - pbs.org/parents/upcycled-activities
- DIY thrift store upcycling - youtube.com/watch?v=4kvuSrrYzHI

Videos/Lessons For the Classroom

- Recycling 101 - <https://www.wm.com/us/en/recycle-right/recycling-101>
- SciShow Kids: How Recycling Works - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlRVPum9cp4>
- Lesson on Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Upcycle - youtube.com/watch?v=XgHALQqs-KQ
- Classroom upcycling challenge activity - youtu.be/HYQdah-f-a0?si=Lwz8PHvS830TufH8

Websites

- What you need to know about Upcycling - greensuggest.com/what-is-upcycling/
- Habitat for Humanity: What is Upcycling? - habitat.org/stories/what-is-upcycling
- 73 Ways to Repurpose Items - mygreenmattress.com/blog/what-is-upcycling/
- Upcycling Lesson Activity For Teachers - creativeeducator.tech4learning.com/2015/lessons/upcycle
- Artist using recycled materials in their activist art pieces - causeartist.com/incredible-recycled-art-materials-creations/