



## Shopping

*“That happiness is to be attained through limitless material acquisition is denied by every religion and philosophy known to humankind, but is preached incessantly by every television set.”*  
--Robert Bellah

### General principles

The most effective ways to reduce waste generated when shopping, in order of priorities:

**Refuse** – avoid buying something new. Could you borrow it or buy it second hand? Avoid items that take batteries (choosing rechargeable batteries if they can't be avoided) – batteries are highly toxic if thrown away with household waste, and even when given to battery recyclers they can only be recycled with a complex and expensive process.

**Reduce** – make the things you have last longer, buy items with minimal packaging, use less of an item or buy it in bulk to reduce the amount of packaging, transport etc.

**Reuse** – re-fashion something you already have.

**Recycle** – buy things with the highest amount of recycled post-consumer waste already used in them, and ensure you recycle them at the end of their life.

Other tips:

- Try to ignore fashion and advertisements, which encourage unnecessary consumption.
- Put a 'no advertising' sign on your letterbox to avoid advertising.
- When buying a new item, investigate whether a good-quality second-hand option is available.

- Don't buy something simply based on its price.
- As far as possible, buy local goods – they use less energy to reach you, create less pollution, and employ local people.
- Choose well-made products that will last, and can be repaired, rather than cheap, shoddy ones.
- Consider the life cycle of the product – what is it made from – renewable resources? Sustainably managed resources? Will it last a long time? If it breaks or stops working, can it be repaired? Will it decompose after it has served its purpose? Can it be recycled?
- Donate unwanted items to op/ tip shops.
- Avoid unnecessary packaging and take your own shopping bags.

When you feel the need for retail therapy, treat yourself to an alternative pleasant experience (a massage, a movie, a picnic with a friend, a walk on the beach or a day in bed with a good library book).

By choosing products with less environmental impact, you also encourage manufacturers to produce more sustainably (for example availability of free-range eggs has increased because of animal welfare campaigners and consumer demand).

Ask retailers for the particular product you are seeking, even if it does not appear to be in the store. This tells the retailer that there is consumer demand for the product. Similarly, ask retailers questions concerning the origins or environmental impacts of the products they sell, as this lets the retailer know that their customers are conscious of environmental issues. Don't be shy about doing this – retailers generally welcome feedback as it allows them to respond to consumer demand ahead of their competitors.



## Environmental terms

Marketing terms like environmentally friendly, eco-safe, recyclable and biodegradable are meaningless without further explanation. For example, does the claim relate to the packaging, product, some of the product components (but not all) or everything?

**Recycled** – a product label should say how much is recycled and whether it is post-consumer waste (already used) or pre-consumer waste (manufacturing waste).

**Recyclable** – while this label shows that a product can be recycled, it says nothing about the sources of the materials used in its production. Further, facilities to recycle the product may not be available in Tasmania, or even in Australia.

In Tasmania, food and beverage containers with codes (1), (2), (3), (4), (5) and (7) on the bottom can be recycled. Don't put plastic shopping bags into your recycling bin – put them into plastic bag recycling bins at one of the major supermarkets.

**Biodegradable** – all components must break down to elements found in nature – oxygen, carbon dioxide, water and biomass. Most landfills lack the microorganisms and oxygen required for waste to biodegrade in a timely manner. Also, when items degrade in landfill, typically an oxygen-starved environment, they release methane gas, which is a greenhouse gas.

**Photodegradable** – (e.g. plastics) break down when exposed to light but are not very degradable when buried in landfills. If they do biodegrade at all, it is likely to be into smaller pieces of plastic.

**Compostable** – items labelled compostable are made from plants like corn, potatoes and sugar cane. Sounds good? Not in practise. Compostable items won't break down in your backyard composting bin. They need to be sent to an *industrial* composting facility, which has higher temperatures and different breakdown conditions. When compostable items end up in

landfill (via normal rubbish collection) they biodegrade in an oxygen-starved environment and release methane gas, which is a greenhouse gas.

**Short story: if you have to buy something (and can't borrow it or buy it second hand), try to buy something made from post-consumer waste, that comes with minimal packaging, and which can be recycled.**

The Environmental Choice Australia Ecolabelling Program looks at whole product life assessment. See the Good Environmental Choice Australia website [www.geca.org.au](http://www.geca.org.au)

## Second-hand vs New

It is often possible to purchase goods second hand rather than new. The following are possible sources of second hand goods:

**Second-hand shops** such as tip shops located at the South Hobart, Glenorchy, Mornington, Margate, Deloraine, and Westbury landfill or waste transfer stations; **Charity op-shops:** [www.opshop.org](http://www.opshop.org) maintains an up-to-date listing of charity op-shops; **Commercial second-hand shops:** Look under 'Secondhand Dealers' in the Yellow Pages.

**Classified advertisements** in local newspapers.

**Internet based services:** e-Bay ([www.ebay.com.au](http://www.ebay.com.au)); The Trading Post ([www.tradingpost.com.au](http://www.tradingpost.com.au)); Gumtree ([www.gumtree.com.au](http://www.gumtree.com.au)); or Freecycle ([www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)) – purely for give-away items.

**Auctions:** Look under "Auction Rooms" in the Yellow Pages.



## Conditions for specific appliances

### General

Check the star ratings and kilowatt-hours per year on the labels. (Buy the most stars but the least kWh per year.)

Choose the right sized appliance for your needs – a bigger fridge or washing machine than you need will waste energy. For a list of energy-efficient appliances see [www.energyrating.gov.au](http://www.energyrating.gov.au).

### Lighting

Compact fluorescent light bulbs are a good idea in areas that are lit over long periods. They use a fifth of the energy of traditional globes, however they wear out more quickly if they are switched on more frequently.

For more information about lighting, see the Sustainable Living Guide: 'Lighting'.

### Electronic devices

Electronic devices rapidly become obsolete. Mobile phones, computers, tablet devices and games consoles are not fully recyclable. Even when recycling is possible it involves considerable transportation.

Ask yourself: Do I really need this device? Can you borrow one or buy a slightly older model second-hand?

### Televisions

There are a variety of types of televisions now available: plasma, LCD and LED/LCD. In general plasma are the least energy efficient, and LED/LCD the most efficient. Energy consumption varies significantly between models, so always check the energy star rating. Another important consideration is: what is going to happen to your old TV? Will it just end up in landfill? If you want digital TV, consider a set-top box (or hard-disk

recorder). This will allow a CRT television to display digital TV channels, thus prolonging the life of a CRT television.

### Hot water heaters

Consider a solar hot water heater if your building has a good northerly aspect. For more information, refer to the Sustainable Living Guide: 'Solar hot water for your home'.

## Water-efficient appliances

AAA shower-heads conserve water.

Front-loading washing machines use less energy and water than top-loaders.

Aerator fittings on taps reduce the flow of water in sinks and basins while still giving the same sensation of water volume.

Timers on garden hoses prevent over-watering by sprinklers.

The SLT website has more information on its Water page: [www.slt.org.au/quickinfo-water](http://www.slt.org.au/quickinfo-water)

For more information about water efficiency and ratings, see: [www.waterrating.gov.au/publications](http://www.waterrating.gov.au/publications)

## Recycled paper

The quantity of recycled fibre content and the bleaching process are two key environmental factors when selecting paper.

**Recycled content** may be as little as 20% (the remainder coming from forest) and as high as 100%

**Bleached paper** – Choose oxygen-bleached products. Elemental Chlorine Free (EFC) bleaching does not use chlorine in its elemental (gaseous) form, but still may use chlorine in other forms. Processed Chlorine Free (PFC) specifies



that the bleaching uses no chlorine or chlorine compounds.

**Toilet paper** – there are many brands of recycled toilet paper available. Ensure the label clearly states “100% recycled” and “not (re-)bleached”

For more information about buying recycled office paper, see:

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/sustainbus/office\\_wasteguides.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/sustainbus/office_wasteguides.htm)

## Cleaning products

Consider green cleaning alternatives such as bicarbonate of soda and vinegar. Many more suggestions can be found in the Sustainable Living Guide: Cleaning.

For commercial detergents, check that they are phosphate-free and chlorine-free, and look for the biodegradability standard – Australian Standard AS 4351 or the International Standard ISO 7827 (which is stricter).

Avoid products (often the surfactant) containing petrochemicals (or mineral oils). Choose plant-based oils which break down much more rapidly.

## Food

### *Produce and dry goods*

Support local farmers and businesses and buy in bulk whenever possible to eliminate excess packaging, transportation and energy consumption.

Where possible, buy fair-trade certified products as this branding gives growers in developing countries a fair return for their labour. See [www.fta.org.au](http://www.fta.org.au) for more information.

### *Sustainable seafood*

Please note: the names of fish are extremely variable, not only between states but also within

Tasmania. The Australian standard for fish names can be found at [seafood.net.au](http://seafood.net.au)

Check the Sustainable Seafood Guide online or download their smart phone app from the AMCS site at

[www.sustainableseafood.org.au/Sustainable-Seafood-Guide.asp?active\\_page\\_id=702](http://www.sustainableseafood.org.au/Sustainable-Seafood-Guide.asp?active_page_id=702).

## Sustainable timber

Recycled timbers can be bought in Southern Tasmania at the Resource Tip Shop (South Hobart), The Recovery Shop at the Glenorchy tip, the CP tip shop at Margate, the Second Chance Re-Use Shop (Mornington), and Uptons (North Hobart and Mornington), who also sell other building materials such doors, windows and roofing material.

When buying new timber, choose plantation-grown timber and avoid timber grown in native forests.

Wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) meets strict environmental standards and is internationally recognised.

For more information please see the *Forest-Friendly Building Timbers* book available from Sustainable Living Tasmania.

The [ecospecifier.com.au](http://ecospecifier.com.au) website allows you to search for timber and other products and establish their eco credentials.

## Gifts

See the Sustainable Living Guide: Sustainable gift ideas.