

# EcoLogic

-the green hornet

“Use it up, wear it out, make it do, do without!”

This verse was adopted during the lean times of the depression era in the US and it was popularized in a poster during World War II. It wasn't really until the 1950's that the disposable idea took off and although the trend certainly isn't reversing, maybe the whole "throw away" notion is currently being reevaluated or could or should be reevaluated.

You may never have encountered the above verse, but you probably have considered the content a time or two in your life. I truly believe that most of us try to avoid 'waste'; however we may define it, for economic, moral and or practical reasons. Because of this, I further believe that we are prudent about making a product/item work to the maximum extent of its intended useful life. However, that 'useful life' term can be pretty subjective, but on the other hand it can be pretty conclusive.

A disposable razor immediately comes to mind as I reflect on the subjective component of the 'useful life' syndrome. I personally have used the same disposable razor for weeks or months; it may be hard to apply any quick and dirty 'rule of thumb' regarding 'usability' considering the variability of conditions a razor is faced with. I guess that I determine that a disposable razor is no longer useful once the blood flow outpaces the water flow from the faucet.

The life span of a single color printer cartridges, laser or ink, is deterministic in that it stops working at the end of its useful life. However, multi-color cartridges do pose a dilemma because the cartridge usually continues to work even when one of the colors is exhausted, your printout just looks a little twisted. So do you continue to use the cartridge that produces the funny looking output or do you trash/recycle it letting the other colored inks go to waste? Life certainly is way too complicated, there are just too many decisions; it's enough to make you weep. How can you be a good recycling citizen and expect to get anything done? One solution would be to avoid the printout altogether.

The rat-packing/hoarding phenomenon probably goes beyond the ostensibly selfish desire to keep something because you may need it later. I'm sure people are reluctant to dispose of things that may not be up to standards of Goodwill but may not be garbage material yet. It appears to be a growing trend where people are more and more concerned about the ultimate disposition of the stuff we manufacture. We seem to be making things at a rate faster than they can go into the landfills, in fact it might be more efficient just to go directly to the landfill from the factory.

For all practical intents and purposes, the chemical makeup of many of the items we manufacture are irreversible. I've seen claims that state that the plastic casings of toner cartridges won't bio-degrade for nearly eight-hundred years; and I wonder if that may not

even be a bit optimistic and if ‘never’ could be the more realistic outlook, but you could always incinerate them of course, which is a whole other story.

So we persist in altering the chemical composition of natural materials in order to manufacture things that assist us in our daily chores and in order to facilitate our bling; and this is all happening at an accelerating pace, by the way. And all this has consequences that we recognize and are trying to deal with. We do what we can in order to minimize the impact that these processes have on the environment which includes economy with the purchase and use of manufactured products as well as recycling. Although there are still opposing factions to the whole global warming thing, it’s pretty in-your-face that we could turn our planet into one huge dump and I think that is an affront to most people; but not all. As the following table from a recent Harris Poll shows, almost a quarter of us don’t recycle anything at home because of availability, expense and good old fashioned laziness:

**"In your own home, do you separate and recycle any of the following?"**

**Base: All Adults**

	Total	Generation			
		Echo Boomers (18-30)	Gen X (31-42)	Baby Boomers (43-61)	Matures (62+)
	%	%	%	%	%
<b>RECYCLE (NET)</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Aluminum or metal cans</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Paper</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Plastic</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Glass (bottles)</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Cardboard</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Batteries, motor oil and other hazardous materials</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Organic materials</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Metal</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>Electronics</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>*</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Something else</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Nothing</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>19</b>

**Note: \* = less than 0.5%**

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[http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris\\_poll/index.asp?PID=783](http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=783)

So, let's keep up the waste not / want not attitude and continue our recycling efforts and together we should have a positive impact on our environment.