

# Recycling – A Waste of Time?

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**W**e all like to do our bit to save the planet, right? Until the recession hits, that is. If you listen to some of the critics with their tales of plummeting prices for recyclable materials leading to companies stockpiling paper in warehouses, and grim warnings about recycling actually adding to global warming, you could be forgiven for wondering if it's all worth it. But before you dismiss recycling as a waste of time and go back to being able to dump your rubbish guilt-free, it's important to remember just how far we've come and exactly what is at stake.

There has been a three-fold increase in recycling rates from 11% in 2000/1 to 34% in 2007/8, and the UKYP's 'Recycling: Free It!' campaign has loads of schools signed up to its joint venture with Oxfam. By stopping now, we run the risk of undermining our success. Certainly, recycled products are as vulnerable to the credit crunch as any other consumer good, but to stop producing them is short-sighted and simply scrapping all of our waste is just burying the problem. Landfills across the country

are running out of space and incineration is a disaster environmentally. Indeed, at a time of recession, surely we should be using our resources more efficiently? Going green is not just something to practice when profitable and it is vital to recycle in order to instil good habits in future generations. Ultimately, a recession is only temporary, but the effects of failing to recycle will cost us the earth.

## THREE TOP TIPS

- Sign up your school to the 'Don't Get Rid - Get Recycling' initiative (see page 13 for more details)
- Pester your Local Authority and local MP for increased recycling facilities in your area
- Do your bit and recycle all paper, plastics, card and cans.

### GADGET FACT 1

In the UK alone, there are around 90 million mobiles in circulation. And more than 340 million in Europe.

### GADGET FACT 2

Every year, 18 million new mobile phones are bought, yet fewer than five per cent of old and unwanted handsets are recycled.

# Young people confused about recycling, say Oxfam and UK Youth Parliament

Two thirds of young people surveyed don't know that their old iPods (69%), digital cameras (73%) and BlackBerrys (70%) can be recycled, according to figures out in January.

Oxfam and the UK Youth Parliament are warning that despite many young people being keen recyclers, few realise that they can recycle

unwanted electronic gadgets after Christmas, with many either throwing items into the bin, or leaving them languishing in a drawer. 1 in 5 young people surveyed (21%) has thrown an unwanted gadget in the bin in the past.

Oxfam and the UK Youth Parliament are joining forces to encourage young people

across the UK to set up recycling collections in their schools. The initiative is part of their 'Don't Get Rid - Get Recycling' campaign, and aims to get 1000 schools signed up in the coming months.

Over half the young people surveyed said they would donate their gadgets to a recycling scheme run by a charity in the future.

## Don't get rid - get recycling

We are aiming to get 1000 schools signed up to the UK Youth Parliament and Oxfam 'Don't Get Rid - Get Recycling' campaign. Follow these simple steps to start recycling your unwanted gadgets:

1. Go to [www.ukyp.org.uk/recycle](http://www.ukyp.org.uk/recycle) and enter your details and the name of your school.
2. You will then receive an email with a step by step guide to setting up a gadgets recycling bin in your school.
3. Make sure pupils in your school know they can recycle gadgets. Put up posters or get your head teacher to send a message to all pupils.
4. Once a certain amount of gadgets have been put in the recycling bin, Oxfam will come and collect.
5. Oxfam will use the cash generated from your old gadgets to provide tools, seeds, school books and lots of other things for countries like Ghana and Sri Lanka.

**For more information go to [www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/recycle](http://www.ukyouthparliament.org.uk/recycle)**

### GADGET FACT 3

More than three-quarters of the population will replace or upgrade their handset in the next 18 months.

### GADGET FACT 4

Some mobiles contain precious metals including gold and silver, and also toxic substances such as cadmium and mercury. If they end up in a landfill site, these can leak into the soil and pollute the surrounding environment. This is important - for example - one mobile battery can be enough to pollute 600,000 litres of water!