

MONEYWISE

VALUING PEOPLE. VALUING MONEY.

Nichole Huff, Ph.D., CFLE | Assistant Extension Professor Family Finance and Resource Management | nichole.huff@uky.edu

REDUCE AND REUSE TO SAVE MONEY

If you wanted to celebrate the Earth, you could have a party – but for this party you wouldn't buy any special supplies. Instead, you would celebrate by using less. There are several times a year that consumers are encouraged to use less, like Earth Day on April 22 and America Recycles Day on November 15. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency dedicates the latter to recognizing the impact of recycling, which has increased from less than 7% in 1960 to 32% today.

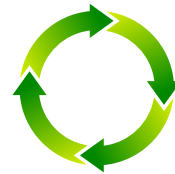
“Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle” are waste-management principles that aim to conserve natural resources and minimize landfill waste. Recycling efforts may vary by region, but anyone anywhere can help to reduce and reuse. Not only does it minimize waste and save energy, but it can also save money.

WAYS TO REDUCE

One of the best ways to reduce is to omit anything you don't need. Many disposable items are sold for convenience such as paper plates, napkins, plastic cutlery, bottled water, and more. Rather than spending money on these disposable items, choose items that can be cleaned and reused. Instead of paper towels, use cloth napkins that can be washed



REDUCE



REUSE



RECYCLE

for cleaning up messes and drying dishes. A six-pack of paper towels averages \$15/pack and families commonly use up to 2 rolls a week. Making this simple swap could save your family \$250 or more a year. Another example is to purchase a reusable water bottle or cup. Many offices and schools now have water bottle refilling stations, which can save you money and reduce waste for the environment.

WAYS TO REUSE

Consider reusing items rather than buying new by shopping consignment sales or stores for clothes and household items. Likewise, have a “stuff swap” with family, friends, or neighbors. Swap clothes and toys your children have outgrown, household items your family no longer needs, or books you have read. What is old to you can be new to someone else.

Cooperative Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources
Family and Consumer Sciences
4-H Youth Development
Community and Economic Development

MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, physical or mental disability or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Reasonable accommodation of disability may be available with prior notice. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties, Cooperating. Lexington, KY 40506



Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

BY REDUCING AND REUSING WE CAN SPEND LESS MONEY AND TIME ON THINGS



Another way to breathe new life into existing items is to repurpose them into something new and fresh. Old T-shirts can be turned into cleaning cloths or made into a handy tote bag. Furniture can be modified and refinished, such as turning a dresser into a TV console. Mason jars or cans can be redecorated into flower vases or storage containers. Plastic bags can be woven into mats that can be donated to homeless shelters.

SMART FAMILY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Using less is one small part of Family Resource Management – all the things we need to manage and run our households. We make choices about how to use many resources every day like how to spend our money, time, and energy. We choose how to prioritize relationships and health. And we decide what to do with our material resources like food, clothing, and shelter. Reducing waste and using less are ways we can stretch our dollars and be smarter about how we use our resources. By reducing and reusing we

can spend less money and time on things we don't need. In exchange, we can gain time, energy, and money to use in other ways.

REFERENCES:

Crane, A. 2021. Sleeping Mats. University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. <https://www.uaex.uada.edu/life-skills-wellness/extension-homemakers/extension-homemakers-blog/posts/sleepingmats.aspx>.

Huff, N. & Board, A. 2026. Using Less: Maximizing Your Resources. Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Service, University of Kentucky.

America Recycles Day. 2025. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. <https://www.epa.gov/circulareconomy/america-recycles-day>.

Reducing and Reusing Basics. 2026. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/reducing-and-reusing-basics>.

Written by: Kelly May, M.S., Senior Extension Associate for Family Finance and Resource Management
Edited by: Nichole Huff, Ph.D. and Nikole Christensen | Designed by: Kelli Thompson, M.A. | Images by: Adobe Stock

Nichole Huff, Ph.D., CFLE | Assistant Extension Professor Family Finance and Resource Management | nichole.huff@uky.edu