
Where does 'waste' come from?

Aluminium cans

Aluminium is a kind of metal made from bauxite ore that is mined from the ground. Ore is metal in its original state, before it has been processed. Ore is a non-renewable resource, which means that there is a limited amount of it in the earth and when it is used up and gone, there will be no more. Getting ore from the ground damages the environment. It very important to limit our use of it and to recycle metal whenever possible. When a factory makes a new drink can from an old drink can, it only takes about 5% of the energy that it takes to make it from the original materials.

Glass

Glass is made from soda, ash, sand and lime. They are heated until they turn into liquid and then shaped into whatever form is needed. The materials are pretty easy to get and it's easy to make, that's why glass has been around for a couple of centuries now. It is easy to recycle glass. Glass that is returned to the glass factories can be melted down and re-made into glass. It can be recycled again and again without losing its strength or changing its qualities. In many countries, people receive money when they return their bottles, and these bottles are cleaned and reused.

Paper

Paper is made from trees, a renewable resource. However, we need to plan carefully to manage these resources to ensure that there will be some for future generations. The wood from trees is shredded into very small pieces. Water and chemicals are added to turn the wood chips into pulp. Then the pulp is spread out thin on screens and dried with heat. People have been making paper for thousands of years.

Paper can be recycled by removing the ink and shredding it again to make the new paper.

Although many Pacific islands cannot recycle paper, there are things that we can do to cut down on our use of paper.

Plastic

Plastic is made from petroleum (oil) that is drilled from the earth. To drill oil from the earth, people use a very deep well and pump. Factories use the oil and other chemicals to mould plastic of all shapes, textures, colours, strengths etc. Making plastic is a very dirty job. There are lots of poisons and pollutants that hurt the environment as plastic is being made. It's important to use as little plastic as possible, because it is bad for the environment, both as it is being made, and later when it's thrown away.

Recycling plastics is difficult. It can be done, but the plastics have to be sorted very carefully, and it takes a lot of energy to recycle the plastic. However, it is important to recycle plastic where possible because the oil it is made from is a non-renewable resource.

Tin cans

Tins cans are made from iron ore and tin. Both are metals that are mined from the ground like aluminium cans. They are also non-renewable, and so it is important to reuse and recycle tin cans where possible.