



Many of us will be aware of the '3Rs' of sustainability - reduce, reuse, recycle.

However with growing use of plastic, we now know that it can usually only be recycled once or twice. And plastic never truly goes away - it just degrades into smaller and smaller pieces. So we need to rethink our use of plastic and other items. This has given rise to a new way of thinking to help each of us reduce our environmental impact, the '6Rs' of sustainability.



Step 1: Rethink – Do you ever think about how much plastic you use on a daily basis? How about how much rubbish you generate each week? The first step in the 6Rs is to stop and think about what you are buying and using. Is it something you need? Is there a way to reduce your waste or change your habits? Becoming self-aware of your current habits is the first step towards changing to a more sustainable lifestyle.

Step 2: Refuse – Once we have taken the time to think about some of the waste we generate, we can then start refusing certain products. We will all be aware of the campaign regarding single use plastic straws. Another example can be buying items in bulk, this can be a good way to reduce plastic (eg buying yogurt in one large container rather than a multipack). However, buying in bulk and then throwing away half the contents rather defeats the issue. The best advice would be to consider buying only what you know you are going to use. Another reason for refusing might be because we don't like what the company stands for, be this workers rights, lack of environmental responsibility, use of chemicals or another issue that is important to you. For example it could be refusing products that do not use certified sustainable palm oil. Whatever reason we have for refusing something, it is a powerful way to use our voice as a consumer.

Step 3: Reduce – This used to be the first step of the 3Rs. Having thought through 'rethink' and 'refuse' we move on to reducing. Buying in bulk usually uses less packaging, is it possible to use a refillable container? As a country steps have been taken to reduce the number of single use plastic bags so we are already active participants.

Step 4: Reuse – Reusing helps to extend the life of an item. This could be reusing the item in the home or by donating them to be used by someone else so giving the item a second life.

Step 5: Recycle – Despite our best efforts it is always likely that we are going to have some waste leftover. Many items can be recycled – paper, cardboard, plastic, glass and metal cans – through the local council fortnightly collections, it is up to us to make the conscious effort to put them in the correct recycling bin. The local authority recycling centres in Preston, Lancaster and Longridge will accept light bulbs, batteries, oil, electronics and other similar items. Our own recycling centre in Catterall will accept some of these items. Perhaps this is an opportunity for neighbours to share the load and reduce the number of car journeys to these centres.

Step 6: Replace – The last step in the 6Rs is to replace. But rather than just buying the same thing challenge yourself to try and find an alternative. Can the same thing be bought but made from recycled materials? Are there better options to your normal choices?