

# Practical approaches on how to tackle the global waste problem

By [Alan Kahn](#)

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Centuries of being wasteful and not being resourceful have had a severe impact on the environment. Since we cannot go back in the past to correct the mistakes that have been made, we must look at what we can do right now to prevent the problem from getting worse and help to restore the environment as much as possible.



There are a lot of people who think to themselves "Recycling a soda can isn't enough to save the environment". However, when millions or even billions of people choose to recycle just 1 soda can, it can have a profound impact. By adding little changes to your lifestyle, you can contribute to aiding the global waste problem.

## Food waste

Disposing of unused food is one of the biggest sources of solid waste in the world. The statistics on the amount of food waste produced yearly are astounding. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that Ireland alone [generates 1,000,000 tons of food waste every year](#). This is a combination of agricultural waste, household waste, and commercial waste. Many other first world countries are also contributing to this problem.

In order to address the issue, people can consider donating uneaten food to food drives or [composting](#). In an effort to sell more produce, many farmers dispose of products that are misshapen and irregular out of fear that consumers will be put off by them in stores. If consumers were to grow more accepting and open to these foods, the amount of agricultural waste could be reduced dramatically.

## Recycle electronics

The EPA estimates that the [US produces more than 2.5 million](#) tons of electronic waste every year. Mobile phones, laptops, and even televisions get thrown away when they break or when people upgrade. Not only are these devices non-biodegradable, they can also contain chemicals such as mercury and lead which makes them dangerous to just be thrown away.

It is much safer and better for the environment to recycle old electronics or even get more life out of them when possible. Due to the fast pace in which new technology is released, most people tend to update devices much quicker than necessary and subsequently dispose of their old technology that still performs well.

Check if your county provides with an electronics recycling drop-off where you can donate your working phone for local emergency use. Mobile phones are equipped with a chip that allows calls to 911 or #77 even when the phone is no longer connected to a service provider.

## Volunteer

According to the report, [What a waste: a global review of solid waste management](#), a large contributing factor of the global waste problem is that cities simply do not have the man power to handle the amount of waste being generated. This is an area of concern particularly with poorer regions.

Citizens can find local Non Profit Organisations that aid in their city's waste management. Many of this NGO's are online and are active on social media. Take your time to do some research and find programs near you. You can start with [Pick Up America](#), the nation's first coast to coast roadside litter pick-up. You can also help with a donation.

## Conserve water

Because people view water as an infinite resource, it has become one of the most wasted resources in the world. Places such as Namibia, Singapore, and parts of Africa do not have access to clean drinking water. A child dies from a [water related illness every 21 seconds](#). The global water crisis is a big epidemic right now, but there are steps that you can take to use to conserve water.

Use your washing machine more efficiently by doing entire loads at a time instead of only washing a couple of items at a time. Also, look for conservative shower heads and low flow toilets that use less water. Water conservation will be one of the topics discussed at the [wastewater treatment conference](#) this year in Israel.

Ultimately, the global waste issue will require mandates and decisions from city governments. Taxes for improper disposal of waste, tax breaks for those who are more environmentally conscious could help relieve a lot of the issues associated with global waste.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan Kahn is a sustainability enthusiast and contributing freelance writer for <http://www2.kenes.com/watec-israel/Pages/Home.aspx> WATEC Israel - Water Management Conference 2013]. Alan covers water technology, waste-water management and other topics for Israel's biggest water technology conference to be held in Tel Aviv on 22 October 2013.

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