

It's Not Easy Being *Green*: But it is Worthwhile

by

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Q. What strategies do you suggest for teaching young children about protecting our environment?

A. Back to basics... the three R's. However, today they mean **reuse**, **reduce**, and **recycle**.

Green is definitely nature's color. It comprises the major part of nature's offerings. *Green* grass, bushes, and trees cover most of the earth. When you enjoy the excitement of a rare and beautiful rainbow, you notice that *green* is the pivotal color - you find it midway between *red*, *orange* and *yellow* on the bottom and *blue*, *indigo*, and *violet* on the top. When you shop for household products like sprays, bags or other supplies, you often find the word *green* on the package indicating that it is biodegradable. Recently the word has taken on a generic usage related to caring for the earth. It is characterized by the new and popular 3 R's - **re-use**, **reduce** and **recycle**.

Protect the Earth and its Atmosphere

While the old *Reading*, *Writing* and *Arithmetic* used to be what we thought of as the most important lessons we could teach our children, today teaching them ways to **protect the earth and its atmosphere** has surpassed the others. Today we want every child to know

how important it is to lead an environmentally sound existence. *Living* and *life* are the highest of all human values.

Global Warming

Scientists tell us about **global warming**. They trace much of it to the non-biodegradable items that we dispose of each day. Every plastic cup, knife, spoon, fork and plastic bag that we throw away turns into chemicals that rise up to form a mass around the earth and block our natural wastes from escaping. Styrofoam cups are considered to be one of the worst offenders. While openness cools, such blocking is what warms.

What to do... Re-Use, Reduce, and Recycle

Re-Use

Remember when you used to play jump rope, jacks, and dodge ball? The jump rope, the jacks, and the ball could be used over and over again. Did you ever play with Lincoln Logs®, Lego's®, or wooden blocks? How about a doll house that you designed and re-designed over and over again? You may not have realized it at the time, but you were a master at re-using.

Re-duce

Many people print pages and pages of information from their computer when they could take a few seconds to jot down the important information they need. Others save paper that has a minimal amount of print on it, load it back into the printer, and use it again to

print on the other side. Still others add a note to the bottom of some e-mails suggesting not to print out the message.

Recycle

Just about every jar and plastic container can be used again. If not, they all can be rinsed and placed in a standard recycle bin. Children of different ages can play different roles in the process from rinsing the items to placing them in the bins. Many items from the recycle bin are tailor-made for making toys and playing games. Collect cards, ribbon, boxes and more for creative play. There are many different ways to participate in the recycle process.

Teach

As you go off to a beautiful park or take a walk with your child, enjoy the richness of the outdoors. Take whatever time you can to **teach** your child about the true meaning of the color *green*. Brainstorm together about all the different ways to **re-use** items like plastic bags, plastic spoons and plastic containers. Think up as many ways as you can to **re-duce** using large quantities of paper napkins, paper towels and other disposables. Remind your child to **recycle** all plastic cups, glass jars and tin cans. Start off your toddler with these respectful habits and continue to refine them as he/she grows..

Have a happy, healthy and environmentally successful day!

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