

Are You a Cyclist?

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Okay. I've got it. I know the 3 Rs and how to do those things. And I've been getting pretty good at all three. I've even started doing some of the other RE- words like REbuy and REforest and REclaim. In fact, to save an old chair from the landfill, I plan to REapolster next month! And I don't know about you, but one of my favorite stores in Waco is the Restore! Yes, I've realized that I should be vigilantly minding my RE-s. I have that prefix down!

But there's a couple of new words in town! People are starting to make use of the Recycle root word, Cycle,...as in "**Upcycle**" and "**Downcycle**." I've heard those two words bandied about a lot lately. I began to think that these were obviously other bits of environmental conservation I could or should be doing. But what is it exactly? Sounds a lot like reusing. I reuse my milk jugs to water my plants and fill the dogs' bowls. Is that upcycling, downcycling or just reusing? What's the difference? Here's what I found out.

Basically, Upcycling is REUSING and REFASHIONING something to make it new again. Oh and did I say better? Yup, that's the UP part. It's a great way to Reuse.

When you upcycle, you change and reuse something for a new, greater purpose! The goal of upcycling is to prevent wasting potentially useful materials. I know, sounds like recycling....but with a twist.

Upcycling can be done industrially or at home! You can buy items that have been Upcycled. I own a purse, purchased at a local Fair Traded Goods store that was made out of candy wrappers. I prefer upcycling myself though. It's creative! Before you toss something away, try to think of some ways you can upcycle it! And if nothing comes to mind, take a look at Pinterest! I upcycled some colored mason jars recently by fitting them with lightbulbs and hanging them in a bunch on my patio. I found the example on Pinterest.com.

Here's a bit of upcycling that caught my attention at www.handsonaswegrow.com/2012. With kids out of school for the summer, it's necessary to keep them busy and creatively stimulated. Upcycling is a perfect way.

Save old lids from peanut butter jars, milk bottles, whatever you can think of. Let children create shapes on foam or felt sheets, cut them out, and glue them to the lids. Give the kids colored ink pads and some scrap paper and let them create their own stationary with stamped borders. They may even enjoy writing that thank you note to Grandma now! Find lots of ideas like this online!



Downcycling is more like REUSING and RECLAIMING materials that are headed to the landfill. In Downcycling, materials are reduced to a lesser quality.

Downcycling can be done industrially or at home also! For example; you can buy packaging material made out of shredded paper. OR you can use a pair of scissors and create your own packaging material out of old newspapers, junk mail, any kind of paper you would be tossing. Another example would be tearing up stained and or torn clothing to make dust rags. How about tearing down an old box and cutting the cardboard into circles to use between dishes that your are packing. That's downcycling!

UPCYCLING. DOWNCYCLING. It's a bit of an up and down, but easier than I imagined to understand and to do. It's even fun!

Remember, however, it's still better to use less. Wait, would you call that *PRECYCLING*?