



## The benefits of recycling

The recycling process involves waste materials being collected, sorted and made into new products and materials. The recycled product will often be the same thing it was before (a glass wine bottle, for example) but can also be “downcycled” into a new product or material (glass can be ground with other materials to make road surfacing). The main environmental benefit of recycling is reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Manufacturing new products from recycled material rather than new virgin material almost always results in lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Making glass, for example, uses 300kg CO<sub>2</sub> less per tonne of glass when you recycle old glass rather than using raw materials (because manufacturing virgin glass involves a carbon-intensive furnace process called calcination).

Recycling waste also reduces the amount of methane generated from biodegradable waste – such as cardboard – breaking down in landfill. Although methane is released in relatively small quantities in the UK it is a far more powerful greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub>. Aside from cutting emissions that contribute to global warming, recycling has the benefit of preserving natural resources. Fewer trees need to be cut down, and fewer minerals and

metals need to be extracted from mines. Even when a natural resource is renewable if managed sustainably – such as paper – harvesting it can still have negative environmental impacts. Forests planted for paper, for example, are often monoculture plantations which are typically much less species-rich than a natural forest. In addition to environmental advantages, recycling may also bring benefits to citizens in terms of tax bills: in the UK, recycling may eventually lead to a lower council tax bill. Local authorities have to pay more for sending rubbish to landfill every year – in 2009, councils across England spent £620m land-filling waste from homes. Figures obtained by consumer group also suggest that if we recycled better – by contaminating less of our recycling with food waste, for example – we may one day save money on lower council tax bills.



(Adapted from *The Guardian*)

### ACTIVITIES

1 Decide if the following statements are true or false and correct the false ones.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 The recycled product always remain the same. <b>T F</b>   | 6 Recycling has other benefits including preservation of natural resources. <b>T F</b>          |
| 2 The main environmental benefit of recycling is reducing water pollution. <b>T F</b>                         | 7 Planting forests for paper provides a wider range of species than natural forests. <b>T F</b> |
| 3 Making new products by recycling old ones reduces gas emissions. <b>T F</b>                                 | 8 Citizens have to pay higher taxes because of recycling. <b>T F</b>                            |
| 4 Recycling also contributes to lowering the amount of methane generated from biodegradable waste. <b>T F</b> | 9 British councils spent a lot of money to send waste to landfill in 2009. <b>T F</b>           |
| 5 The UK produces more methane than CO <sub>2</sub> . <b>T F</b>  | 10 More money would be saved if people recycled better. <b>T F</b>                              |

2 Use a monolingual dictionary and find definitions for the following words.

- |                   |                    |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1 To grind .....  | 5 Waste .....      |
| 2 Surfacing ..... | 6 Powerful .....   |
| 3 Raw .....       | 7 Harvesting ..... |
| 4 Landfill .....  | 8 Bill .....       |

3 What does recycling mean? Make a list of all the actions people should take in their homes and discuss their advantages and disadvantages.

4 Are there any recycling rules in your country? What about the area where you live? Are there problems related to waste disposal? Discuss it in your groups