

other resources and creates pollution. Their "lifetime" in a landfill can range from a few years for paper, to centuries for plastics.

***ECOFACT:** Some 1.5 million plastic bags are thrown away *each day* in Hong Kong. This is a waste of a landfill space and of a valuable natural resource, as plastics are made from oil. Plastic bags are also an eyesore that litter beaches and public places.

Reducing waste is the first place to start when encouraging students or other individuals to take positive action for the environment. Reducing means trying to avoid goods with excess packaging, replacing throw-away items with durable substitutes and steering clear of items that are not really needed or wanted. For instance, why buy chocolates with elaborate packaging when those with a simple paper wrapping may be just as tasty? Why keep paper napkins at home when cloth ones will do just as well? Or why accept a tiny plastic bag for small purchases such as a candy bar, which can be consumed right away or fit easily into a pocket?

Special effort should also be made to avoid certain types of packaging. Styrofoam and plastics are both made from oil, a non-renewable resource, and they can take centuries to degrade. They are also damaging to animals, which think they are food and choke to death when they eat them. Styrofoam has the additional problem

of harming the ozone layer because it is often "blown" using ozone-depleting chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) or hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). Students, and everyone, should be encouraged to avoid eating lunch from styrofoam lunchboxes and to bring their own reusable lunch containers. Many schools have already participated in FoE's campaign to have lunches served on reusable plates.

**Ecofact: Hong Kong throws away about 100 tonnes of styrofoam each day. When you think how light styrofoam is, that is a lot of styrofoam taking up precious space in our landfills.*

Re-using means using a disposable item as many times as possible before it is thrown away. Not everything can be replaced with durable items. Paper, cardboard packaging, plastic bottles and other items will eventually end up in a rubbish bin, but why not get the most use out of them first? The whole premise of this book is to encourage reuse in a creative way. Even a small cardboard box can be of use to a child, who can turn it into a dollhouse, robot, bus, or anything he or she puts his or her imagination to.

Apart from artwork, many items can be reused. Both sides of a paper should be used before it is thrown away. Plastic bags from the supermarket can be used as bin