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## EARTHTALK FOR YOUNG READERS

### Week of 10/24/2004

From Stacy Clark, Youth Editor of E/The Environmental Magazine

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**Dear EarthTalk, Young Readers: My teacher said that landfills are growing bigger and bigger. What does she mean?**

—Jeffrey T. Shreveport, LA

Jeffrey, your teacher is referring to the amount of garbage that is trucked to landfills each day. Many of the things that we all use every day are disposable products, designed to be used once or twice, and then tossed into the garbage. While disposable products can be very convenient, many of them (plastic water bottles and printer ink cartridges, for example) are not biodegradable. Non-biodegradable products don't "break down" naturally, so plastic bottles deposited in a landfill five years ago – or even 15 years ago – are going to look pretty much the same as new ones deposited there today.

Last year, in 2003, over 30 million plastic water bottles were used in America each day! Nine out of ten of these bottles ended up as garbage in landfills. Imagine 27,000,000 plastic water bottles piling up in our landfills each year! Because plastic can take up to 1,000 years to degrade, it creates quite a problem in terms of available landfill space. With so many people using and disposing of so many non-biodegradable products, landfills are growing bigger and bigger!

What can be done? Three things!

### 1. Reduce.

Avoid buying disposable products and products with excess plastic packaging.

### 2. Reuse.

Try to use things more than one or two times.



- ◆ Ask an Environmental Question
- ◆ Editors, bring EarthTalk Young Readers to your newspaper or website!



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**Take Action!**

\*Keep organic foods organic  
 Politicians and big businesses want to gut organic food laws. Help us stop them. **Take action!**

\*Something is fishy  
 Mercury is a toxic contaminant that is showing up in dangerously high concentrations in the fish we eat, yet the FDA isn't protecting us!? **Take action!**

**GO Add the Action Box to your site!**

**3. Recycle.**

Recycle your bottles, cans, glass and paper! Recycled garbage is used to make new products and when we do that, less garbage ends up in landfills.

So, if we reduce the amount of things we use, reuse the things we already have, and recycle the things we're finished with, we'll be saving resources and helping to reduce the amount of garbage we create!

**GOT AN ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTION?** Send it to: EARTH TALK for YOUNG READERS, c/o E/The Environmental Magazine, P.O. Box 5098, Westport, CT 06881; submit your question at: [www.emagazine.com](http://www.emagazine.com); or e-mail us at: [stacy@emagazine.com](mailto:stacy@emagazine.com).

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