



## How to Get Really, Really Good Stuff

Stuff: we all have it. We all need it (some of it, anyway). But we don't just want stuff, we want really, really good stuff that is safe, non-toxic, healthy, durable, and brings happiness into our lives without polluting or damaging our bodies and planet.

But, how do you know when stuff is really, really good? Can you tell by brand name? Not always. Can you tell by price? Not at all. So how can you tell the goods and services you spend hard-earned money on are the really, really good ones and not something else?


1. **Good new stuff is made out of good old stuff.** This allows the energy that it took to make the old items to be captured and held in the new items. Energy and resources are saved because using old things does not require getting new raw material. And there are plenty of old things, like empty glass bottles, waiting to be made into new things.
2. **Good stuff is made to last.** Right now, only 1% of all of the items we buy are still in use 6 months after purchase. Good things are durable and designed to be repairable when they do break. This allows us to work with the people who fix things, like cobblers fixing shoes or the small engine repair shops extending the life of lawn mowers and snow blowers.
3. **The makers of good stuff look forward to the day when, after a long and productive lifecycle, the stuff they made comes back home to them.** Then it is broken down and the parts are either reused or recycled to be made into the next generation of things. Companies like this take responsibility for the things they make and share responsibility with you and the government so resources are used wisely and cost-effectively without damaging the environment. This is called "producer responsibility" and many states, including Minnesota, are looking at passing legislation that mandates this level of responsibility for all the companies that make the things we buy.
4. **The stores that sell the things we buy can support all of this by giving shelf space to the items that are reusable, durable, and made of recycled content.** They make space for refilling stations that allow you to refill the laundry detergent bottle instead of throwing it away and buying a new one. After all, we're not interested in buying the bottle – we just want what's in it!

*(continued)*

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Our mission is to reduce waste today through innovative resource management and to reach a waste-free tomorrow by demonstrating that waste is preventable, not inevitable.

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5. **If our really, really good stuff is still good but we don't need it anymore, there are services to help find it new homes.** For example, the [Twin Cities Free Market](#) is an excellent way to get and give good, reusable stuff from and to your neighbors, or you can donate to organizations like Goodwill.

Truly good items and services have one thing in common: the companies that make and offer them are using nature's model for creating goods and services. In nature, the waste product of one system is the raw material for the next. Nothing is wasted and things are made to last or flow right back into the system. If we use these methods to make, buy, use, reuse, and recycle all our stuff we not only get closer to nature, we get to zero waste as well. And, we still get really, really good stuff.

More Resources:

1. [Recycling Plastic: Complications and Limitations](#), by Eureka Recycling
2. Reduce & Rethink: [What is extended producer responsibility](#) and what's happening in Minnesota?
3. [www.TwinCitiesFreeMarket.org](http://www.TwinCitiesFreeMarket.org): Eureka Recycling's reuse program—a place to give and get reusable goods for free
4. *The Story of Stuff: The Impact of Overconsumption on the Planet, Our Communities, and Our Health-And How We Can Make It Better*, by Annie Leonard, Free Press, 2011 ([storyofstuff.org](http://storyofstuff.org))
5. *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*, by William McDonough (2002) & Michael Braungart (2008)