

RECYCLING E-WASTE

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COMPUTER MONITOR

Gold, zinc, copper, aluminum: these are just a few of dozens of Earth materials that make our computers, cell phones, and game consoles work. Each of these materials comes from minerals that people mine from the ground. For example, aluminum is made from the mineral bauxite, and copper is extracted from bornite or malachite. A typical laptop computer contains over 30 minerals that come from at least 20 different countries around the world.



OLD CELL PHONES

Sure, all those materials are useful in electronic gadgets. However, they can be hazardous to habitats, animals, and people. Toxic materials such as mercury and lead can get into soil and underground water.

In order to avoid polluting our resources, all e-waste must be handled with care when we dispose of it. In fact, many states have laws saying it cannot be tossed in landfills.

E-waste includes all electronics and items that run on electricity. Here is an easy way to tell if an item you have

is e-waste. If it has a cord, it's e-waste!

So where does e-waste end up?

E-waste materials recovery facilities (or MRFs) come to the rescue. These companies specialize in taking apart



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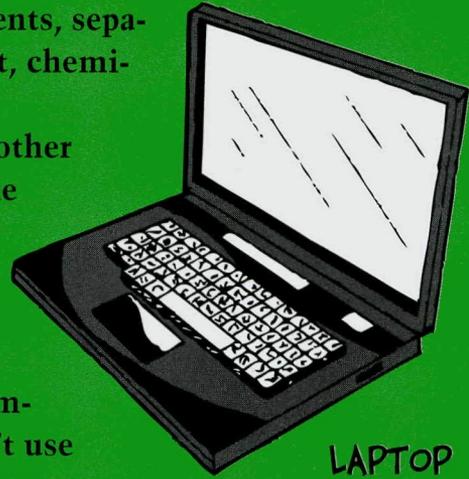
e-waste to be recycled. Workers “unbuild” components, separating each different kind of material. They use heat, chemicals, and tools to take things apart.

Next, workers send all the recovered material to other companies for reprocessing. It can be reused to make new electronics or it can be made into many other kinds of products. Recycling all of our e-waste also helps to reduce the amount of new material that has to be mined to make more new electronics.

What do you do when you upgrade to a newer computer, game console, or music player when you can't use the old one any longer? One idea is to donate it. Some non-profit organizations, churches, and schools have technicians who can rework a computer to make it useful for their needs. Another choice is to dispose of it. However, with all that toxic and useful material inside, it is important to send it to an e-waste recycler.

If you don't know where you can donate or dispose of your e-waste safely, call your city's utility or municipal waste department. They will have a list of agencies or companies that specialize in recovering and recycling computers and other e-waste in your community. Many communities also have e-waste collection drives. Some large retail stores accept unwanted electronics.

Recycling e-waste is easy! Set aside a small area in your home to collect e-waste gadgets. Find out where your community has a collection drive or where it accepts e-waste. Make it part of your family's regular housekeeping activities.



LAPTOP
COMPUTER



MP3
PLAYER



GAME
CONSOLE



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CELL PHONES

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