

3 R's of greening

A new school year is under way, and smart students are discovering new and old ways to make it their "greenest" year yet.

The "three Rs" of my childhood (reading, writing and arithmetic) have been replaced by the three Rs of today's more ecologically enlightened generation: reduce, reuse and recycle. Here are some ways parents and teachers may incorporate them into lessons for living:

■ Reduce

... driving and shopping for school supplies. First check to see what you already have at home, and then plan your shopping trips so you accomplish more and drive less.

... driving kids to school and activities that are a mile or less in distance. Walking and riding bikes for shorter distances is better for the environment and is great exercise. For longer distances, create carpools with other parents.



... buying items that are made from virgin materials. Instead, buy paper, supplies and products made from recycled materials. Look for high levels of post-consumer waste in your recycled paper, and check that the paper was made "chlorine free" so harmful chemicals weren't used in creating it.

Buy backpacks and book bags that are made to last longer, so you reduce the need to replace them so frequently. Use pencils when you can; they're made from renewable and recycled materials.

■ Reuse

... lunch boxes and lunch bags made out of cloth instead of using disposable bags. Use a thermos or other refillable drink container.

... old spiral notebooks by tearing out and recycling used pages. If you need new notebooks, try loose-leaf binders and fill them with recycled paper.

... pens. Buy the refillable kind so you create less waste.

■ Recycle

... last year's wardrobe. Chances are it's still in fashion and has lots of wear remaining. Just replace worn out and outgrown items. Shop for previously worn clothes at thrift shops, and donate your clothes in good condition.

... cans, bottles, paper and other recyclable items at school and at home.

Have a new green living tip to share, or a question you'd like to ask? E mail me at alanst@svswa.org and look for the answer in upcoming columns.

ALAN STYLES is recycling coordinator for the Salinas Valley Solid Waste Authority. His column appears the third Friday of the month in Central Coast Living.