



p-TIPS

Green purchasing for class (Earth-friendly back-to-school tips)

Whether school starts in April or September, parents around the world open their wallets to buy school supplies every year. This is a good time to start educating your children in conscious green purchasing and respect for earth's precious resources. Tom Kay, cofounder and president of EcoMall (<http://ecomall.com>), points out that: "Petroleum oil, a nonrenewable resource, is used in the manufacture of chemicals and plastic commonly found in most school supplies. Environmentally speaking, using supplies made of natural ingredients is always preferable." Below are some of EcoMall's tips on shopping for classroom needs in an environmentally friendly, and ultimately more productive, way.

- 1) Buy pencils, regular and colored. Wooden pencils come from a renewable resource, can be erased (thus saving paper), and don't contain the toxic chemicals found in most art markers and inks.
- 2) Buy refillable pens. These not only save resources and cut down on waste, they save money.
- 3) Buy notebooks and other paper supplies made of recycled paper. Recycled paper items for the student set are easier to find and more "fashion-conscious" than even five years ago. Can't find what you need? Visit the shops near your child's school and request that they stock recycled paper products.

- 4) Buy plain, old-fashioned, wax-based crayons. Avoid artist's pastels, since some contain asbestos, and scented oil-based crayons, which can be a hazard to very young children who may be tempted to eat them.
- 5) Buy white school glue or paste. Epoxy or instant-bonding glues rely heavily on petroleum resources and can also bond dangerously quickly to fingers and eyes.
- 6) When choosing a back-to-school wardrobe, support companies offering organic cotton and hemp clothing. Organic clothing does not contain toxic pesticides, which is better for our kids and our planet (conventional cotton cultivation accounts for 25% of pesticide consumption worldwide).
- 7) Get your school recycling. Speak up at a parents' meeting to encourage the purchase of recycled products by the administration and establish a school-wide recycling program. This will save school funds for other uses.
- 8) Make your school a toxin-free zone. Ask the school board to change to nontoxic cleaners and avoid the use of toxic pesticides indoors. These will improve air quality and reduce health risks and allergies.