



Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec
Environmental Health Association of Québec

ECO-JOURNAL

April 2021

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Make every day an Earth Day!

Going Green - The 3 RE Theory

Part 1 - A Definition and the First Concept

Every day you buy items for your daily life and throw more in the garbage. But when you dispose of an item you have purchased, what will you decide to do? In other words, what are the key concepts that will guide your decision? In this topic (divided into three parts), I will introduce you to these concepts that are embedded in the 3RE theory. Specifically, and in this article, you will learn more about this theory – as well as another movement associated with it – and read about the first concept of the 3RE theory: reduce.

It is difficult to define the exact origin of the 3RE theory; however, its creation would come from the establishment of the Earth Day Network in 1970. Note that International Earth Day is April 22nd, and, on this day, you are invited to take action to restore our planet. As a private citizen, the best set of actions you can apply every day are related to the 3RE. If you place the four concepts associated with this theory in an inverted pyramid, they go into this waste hierarchy (from most to least favored): reduce, reuse, recycle, enhance.

At the turn of the last century, another movement was created in California to establish best practices in municipal waste manufacturing and management. Thus, and with these considerations in mind, the Zero Waste movement emerged in 2009. This lifestyle comes with five concepts that are quite similar to those of the 3RE theory. These concepts of the Zero Waste movement (called the 5 R's) are: refuse, reduce, reuse, recycle and rot. The first concept associated with the 5 R's is





to prevent waste from entering your home (or your hands) in the first place to minimize its production. Also, this concept implies saying 'no' to waste in the form of single-use disposables. Finally, the concept of such a refusal is to ask yourself if you really need a product when you buy it (choosing healthy alternatives is another possibility).

In the 3RE theory, reduction is the first step in the waste pyramid. According to its dictionary definition, this concept means "to minimize to a lesser extent, size, quantity, number, etc." Waste reduction can be done at two levels: reduction in consumption of goods, or reduction in energy consumption. Here are some examples (or goals) that are related to this concept and that you can apply every day to reduce the number of materials and products that cannot be reused or recycled:

- Limit the amount of material that makes up disposable products and thus limit over-packaging of products.
- Adapt appliances according to our needs (for example, turn off the lights in a room when you are not there or turn down the heating of the house when you are not indoors).
- Cutting down on waste by reducing water leaks, shutting down on standby devices, using low-energy light bulbs, etc.
- Change your lifestyle and use fewer products for home maintenance or personal hygiene.
- Apply the first R of the Zero Waste movement and refuse things you do not need (such as junk mail, advertisements, and flyers).

In the next article, you can read about a second concept in this theory; more specifically, you can read about recycling and waste sorting. To learn more about this topic, you are invited to check out the following links. Please note that more links will be added to the other parts of this topic in the following newsletters. Also, you can consult the Zero Plastic, Zero Waste page of the ASEQ-EHAQ's Eco Living Guide (<https://lavieecolo.ca/en/zero-plastic-zero-waste/>) to learn more about the Zero Waste movement around you.



Online links (in English and French):

- The 5 “R’s” of Zero Waste: A Practical Guide, par Jenna Judd, Zero Waste Exchange, publié le 7 juillet 2017, <https://zerowastexchange.org/551/the-5-rs-of-zero-waste-a-practical-guide>
- Trois R, Wikipédia, l’encyclopédie libre, dernière modification faite le 18 mai 2020, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trois_R
- Zero waste, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, dernière modification faite le 14 janvier 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zero_waste
- Earth Day: The Official Site, copyright in 2021, <https://www.earthday.org/>
- Definition of Reduce at Dictionary.com, consulté le 18 février 2021, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/reducing?s=t>