

10 Steps to a Greener, Healthier Office

1. Reuse and recycle paper:

Did you know?

- Approximately 85% of all office paper is discarded annually.
- The average office employee goes through 10,000 sheets of paper annually.
- Over 90% of the printing and writing paper made in the U.S. is made from virgin tree fiber.

Alternative:

- Use the back of fax paper or paper printed on one side as scrap paper.
- Print draft materials on the back of paper that has only been used on one side.



Tip: Keep a tray by the printer and fax labeled 'for scrap' paper, for others to drop off paper used on one side. Put a recycling bin next to the printer.

2. Save paper:

Did you know?

- It takes about 20 trees and 16,000 gallons of water to make a ton of virgin fiber paper versus 9,000 gallons for a ton of 100% recycled paper.
- One ton of paper requires the use of 98 tons of various resources.

Alternative:

- Use "print preview" on your computer to review, edit, or format a document instead of printing it out.
- Email or e-fax docs instead of printing them out (and if you do fax docs, make sure the fax doesn't use thermal paper).
- Use the duplexing (double-sided printing) functionality when printing and copying.



Tip: Avoid printing multiple copies of documents; instead, email them. This is also applicable to meetings, where documents can be emailed before or after the meeting, and viewed electronically using a projector during the meeting.

3. Recycle the basics as well as electronics, toners and other office items:

Did you know?

- The lifespan of an aluminum can that gets thrown into the trash instead of the recycling bin is 80-100 years; aluminum cans can be recycled indefinitely.
- The US generates more electronic waste (e-waste) than any other nation; less than 10% of computers are currently recycled.

Alternative:

- Recycle the basics: aluminum cans, plastic bottles, cardboard, etc..
- Recycle electronics – ask your office about their electronics recycling policy or go to Best Buy, Staples or other stores and inquire about the items they take for recycling.
- Many manufacturers have take-back programs for computers and recycling programs for toners.
- Donate computers, furniture, and other discarded items to charity or sell them.



Tip: Designate an office "Recycling Coordinator" who will oversee the recycling program.

4. Conserve energy:

Did you know?

- According to a US Department of Energy (DOE) end use study, lighting accounts for about 29% of the energy use in a typical office.
- One study found that one workstation (computer and monitor) left on after business hours is responsible for the emission of nearly one ton of carbon dioxide per year. This can be decreased by 80% if the computer is turned off at night and set to 'sleep mode' during the day.

Alternative:

- Turn off your computer when you leave the office; contrary to popular belief, this will not harm it in the long run.
- Turn off the lights when you leave the office for a meeting and for the day.
- Talk to you office manager and ask him/her to enable the energy saving features on the office printer(s), photocopier(s) and scanner(s), and to consider installing occupancy sensors for the lights.



Tip: Screen savers do not conserve energy; set your computer to sleep mode if you are not using it for a certain period of time (for example, 10 minutes).

5. Save toner:

Did you know?

- About 97% of the materials that make up a toner cartridge are recyclable.
- Each year, over 600 million ink cartridges are consumed in the US.
- Up to three quarts of oil are needed to produce a single printer cartridge.

Alternative:

- Use less toner by selecting “draft” printouts when using the “print” command on your computer; this can also be set as the default.
- Talk to your office manager about using refillable toner cartridges.



Tip: When you get the “toner low” light on the printer, you may not necessarily need to replace it yet. Just take it out, shake it gently, and put it back in. When it really needs replacing, the toner light will stay on even after you’ve done that.

6. Reuse supplies:

Did you know?

- Commercial waste, including office waste, amounts to about 35 - 45% of the total municipal solid waste generated in the US.
- Your organization can save money by extending the life of supplies.

Alternative:

- Reuse binders, envelopes, refill pens, tape dispensers, file indexes, and other office supplies.
- Use incoming cardboard boxes and fiber padded envelopes, as well as popcorn and shredded newspaper for outgoing mail and packages. If you have leftover packing materials, ask your vendor whether they will take it back and if they don’t, suggest they set up a take back program.



Tip: Designate a stationery reuse center or exchange area. Materials that can be reused can include everything from presentation supplies, file folders, and binders, to furniture, telephones and wastebaskets. Encourage your co-workers to check this center before ordering new supplies.

7. Buy items with recycled content:

Did you know?

- The price of recycled paper is, in most markets, comparable to that of virgin paper.
- Buying office supplies that contain recycled content encourages the development of the recycling industry, conserves natural resources, saves energy, reduces solid waste, reduces air and water pollutants, reduces greenhouse gases, and creates new jobs.

Alternative:

- Buy reusable and durable supplies and materials, and paper that is unbleached and de-inked.
- With everything you buy, keep the packaging to a minimum.



Tip: Beyond paper, a great variety of recycled office supplies are available locally or through online ordering.

8. Reuse and recycle food containers:

Did you know?

- Plastics use fossil fuels in the manufacturing process, and plastic utensils and containers are usually hard to recycle.
- Styrofoam leaches styrene; this is especially the case with hot, fatty, acidic, or alcoholic beverages or foods. In addition, it is non-biodegradable so it will stay in the landfill indefinitely.

Alternative:

- Bring a reusable mug to the office; use it for coffee, tea, etc...; bring a glass for water.
- Keep a set of silverware and dinnerware at the office instead of using plastic forks and plates.



Tip: Purchase food in bulk rather than in individually wrapped or over-packaged containers, and be sure to rinse out containers before recycling them.

9. Take public transportation or carpool:

Did you know?

- Americans now use automobiles for more than 90% of their daily trips.
- The average driver spends 443 hours, or 18.45 days, a year behind the wheel.
- Motor vehicles are responsible for about one-third of global oil use, but for nearly two-thirds of US oil use.

Alternative:

- Take the bus, train, or metro, or bike or walk when possible or look into telecommuting options.
- Start a carpooling or vanpooling program at your office.



Tip: Ask your employer about incentives to use public transportation and carpooling.

10. Talk to your office manager about purchasing eco-friendly electronics:

Did you know?

- Businesses in the US spend \$4 billion annually on inefficient use of office equipment (copiers, computers, postage machines, and printers).
- ENERGY STAR qualified office and imaging products use 30-75% less electricity than standard equipment.

Alternative:

- Purchase Energy Star printers, copiers, faxes and computers.



Tip: Go to the Energy Star web site for more information on potential savings of buying Energy Star products: www.energystar.gov.

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