

How to Recycle Printer Ink Cartridges, Paper, and Other Office Supplies

Reusing and recycling office supplies extends the useful life of materials and prevents the need for further resource use and company expense. A company's environmentalism is also increasingly becoming a branding commodity and a point of corporate praise. Studies have shown that employee satisfaction is increased when they feel that their employer supports environmental initiatives. And bringing green policies to a business is an opportunity for eco-friendly education to influence workers' behaviors well beyond the walls of the office.

Setting up a company-wide recycling and reusability initiative requires research and preparation to determine which office supplies are recyclable, which are not, and how to start an effective program.

Office Supplies That Are Recyclable

Most items within eyesight of anyone's office desk can be recycled. In fact, with a little research, one might discover just how useless their office trash bin is. Even materials one may never have considered recycling, like Styrofoam or the mats beneath their chairs, can be given new life at a recycling plant.

Common recyclable office materials include:

- Office furniture
- Newspapers
- Empty glass and plastic bottles and aluminum cans
- White office paper, with or without staples
- Toner and ink
- Batteries
- Styrofoam
- Chair mats
- Light bulbs
- Cardboard boxes
- Computer equipment
- Eyeglasses

The U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency offer guidance on recyclable office goods, as do local waste haulers and municipalities.

Office Supplies That Are Not Recyclable and What to Do with Them

Despite the large amounts of office materials that are recyclable, it is important to note which ones are not. Simply tossing everything into the recycle bin and letting the recycler sort it hurts the efficiency of recycling plants. Soiled food wrappers, for instance, can spread food waste onto other recyclables, requiring all items to be removed by hand or else the entire batch of material will be contaminated.

Some common office items that cannot be recycled include:

- Food wrappers, including yogurt cups
- Paper cups
- Ceramic mugs or dishes

- Post-It notes
- Padded envelopes
- Rubber bands
- Three-ring binders
- Adhesive tape
- Carbon paper
- Wax paper
- Pressure-sensitive labels
- Plastic or metal binders

Just because an item is not recyclable does not mean that it should be immediately trashed after one use. Many office supplies can be reused or repurposed multiple times over. Knowing when to recycle, trash, or reuse something can mean the difference between a sustainable office environment and a wasteful one.

Helpful Links:

- List of Recyclable Office Goods
<https://www.energy.gov/management/office-management/employee-services/recycling>
- How to Recycle Paper at the Office
<https://mydisposal.com/how-to-recycle-paper-at-the-office>
- Electronics Donation and Recycling Tips
<https://www.epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling>
- Everything You Need to Know About Paper Recycling
<https://earth911.com/business-policy/business/paper-recycling-details-basics/>
- What Happens if You Put Non-Recyclable Items into Your Recycle Bin?
<https://www.valleywasteservice.com/valley-waste-news/what-happens-if-you-put-non-recyclable-items-into-recycling-4034>
- Why Can't I Recycle Stuff with Food on It?
<https://livegreen.recyclebank.com/column/because-you-asked/why-can-t-i-recycle-stuff-with-food-on-it>
- Eight Items That You Think Are Recyclable That Aren't
<https://cleanriver.com/8-items-that-arent-recyclable/>
- Reusable Alternatives for Non-Recyclable Materials
<https://www.munciesanitary.org/lets-talk-trash-reusable-alternatives-for-non-recyclable-materials/>
- What Can Be Recycled Through Store Drop-Off Locations?
<https://how2recycle.info/sdo>
- Tips to Set Up a Successful Recycling Program
<https://www.recyclespot.org/Get-Started/At-Work.aspx>
- Seven Ways to Improve an Office Recycling Program
<https://recyclecoach.com/workplaces/blog/7-simple-ways-to-improve-the-office-recycling-program-for-your-company/>

[Source: HP Development Company, L.P.]

<https://www.hp.com/us-en/shop/tech-takes/recycle-ink-cartridges-paper-office-supplies>