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## Re-Using and Recycling Materials (Other than Paper)

When people think of recycling, paper, glass and metals easily come to mind. But there are many other items which, with a little forethought, can be reused or recycled if you no longer have a use for them. This handout provides some ideas on what to do with items other than paper.

### Why bother?

Organisations large and small have an important role to play in collective action against waste. Many recyclable materials end up as general rubbish because people are either not aware of local opportunities for reuse or recycling, or because organisations have a 'blind-spot' on this topic. Recycling efforts are usually associated with good environmental practice (e.g. cutting pollution, saving energy, conserving finite resources) but re-use options can have important social benefits too. For example, furniture recycling projects are increasingly working in partnership with community anchor organisations and housing associations to deliver these quality of life improvements. It also makes sense to link your recycling efforts with your purchasing – can you buy items that are easier to reuse or recycle? See **Green Purchasing**, <http://eaclink.info/?SMWPPW>, for more information.

Not all the information below will apply to your organisation. Due to variations in regional reuse and recycling facilities some organisations will find it easier than others. But bear in mind that if facilities don't exist today, pilot schemes may be in the pipeline tomorrow. Tightening waste legislation is leading to more local authorities and waste disposal companies trying out new ideas.

### Go second hand

Do you need items? Second-hand doesn't necessarily mean second-best or inferior quality. Over-ordering, office re-location and re-branding in the corporate sector releases large quantities of usable furniture and office equipment – check out furniture reuse projects or second-hand office suppliers (advertised in local media and directories) and even keep an eye on skips for last minute discards when offices/rental units are being cleared.

### An A-Z of recyclable materials

#### Aluminium foil & cans:

Ask around to find local groups collecting this high value metal for fundraising (e.g. Guide Dogs for the Blind). Alternatively, encourage staff and volunteers to take empty drinks cans back home for kerbside recycling or put in on-street recycling banks. Both aluminium and steel is easily recycled into new cans and other items, saving energy and resources. Rinse and squash cans. Re-use sandwich trays left by external caterers.

**Batteries:**

Manufacturing batteries uses large amount of energy and some contain hazardous substances. Many local authorities accept appliance and car batteries through kerbside recycling or recycling centres. An increasing number of electrical retailers offer in-store collection points. Better still, use rechargeable batteries or mains supply.

**Books:**

Donate spare publications to local reference libraries or other organisations.

**Building & decorating materials e.g. leftover paint, wallpaper, wood:**

Resource centres, community centres and play projects are interested in non-hazardous items such as wallpaper and fabrics. There is a national network of Community RePaint projects distributing unwanted paint to community groups – DIY stores may offer drop-off points (<http://www.communityrepaint.org.uk> for your nearest scheme) Try allotments, city farms or community garden projects for donations of bricks, wood, old window frames, large sheets of plastic etc. Wildlife groups may want wood for making bird and bat boxes.

**Computers & computer consumables:**

There is a growing number of computer reuse/recycling schemes. One example is Computer Aid International <http://www.computeraid.org>. Ask a local recycling group or your local authority about local schemes. Smaller community groups may be able to offer a new home to equipment in good working order. Recycling Centres (or Civic Amenity sites) offer a collection facility for old equipment, including monitors.

**Electrical & electronic appliances/equipment:**

These are now covered by the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Regulations. If items are broken, take the plug off for reuse and dispose of responsibly. Ask the local authority about local facilities. Collections exist for some items e.g. fridges or take to the nearest Recycling Centre. The Furniture Reuse Network directory is worth checking for local projects ([www.frn.org.uk/directory](http://www.frn.org.uk/directory)) as some schemes take electrical items. Do not put fluorescent tubes in normal waste collections. If in doubt, ask your local authority. Kettles, lighting and other equipment still in working order are often needed by local groups.

**Furniture & furnishings**

(e.g. tables, desks, chairs, floor coverings, carpet tiles). Try community groups, faith-based social action schemes, hostels, and furniture re-use schemes. Use the directory on the Furniture Reuse Network's website to find local projects (<http://www.frn.org.uk/directory>). There will be other outlets locally that aren't members of FRN.

**Glass:**

Glass is a material that is easily recycled into new bottles. It doesn't degrade in a landfill site so recycling is crucial. Have a collection point within the office for bottles/jars or, if space is very limited, ask staff/volunteers to take items home with them (if they have a recycling collection) or to use recycling banks near to your office or at supermarkets. Arrange to have bottles taken to bottle-banks after events. (see Green Events, <http://eaclink.info/?TPEOW>).

**Office equipment:**

It shouldn't be hard to find a home if items (e.g. filing cabinets, tables, chairs, desks, electronic items) are in reasonably good condition. The same goes for unwanted stationery and files.

**Oil:**

It's illegal to pour motor oil down the drain. Garages and recycling centres offer collection points. Contact your local authority or garage for convenient outlets.

**Printer and toner cartridges (laser, inkjets):**

Support charity collections – either by offering a collection point in your building or by distributing mailing envelopes. Check which brands are wanted – not all are and disposal will cost the charity money. Investigate cartridge refilling schemes to reduce waste.

**Stamps:**

Help charities fundraise by giving them your used stamps. Setting up a collection may foster a sense of connection with other voluntary and community initiatives e.g. hospices, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Oxfam, RNIB etc. Other wanted items include mobile phones, some brands of computer printer cartridges and foreign currency.

**Timber (wood):**

Accepted at Recycling Centres for reuse.

**Tools:**

Give to community garden and wildlife projects, jumble sales, swap events, or investigate whether your unwanted items are needed by Tools for Self Reliance, a charity collecting and refurbishing certain items for overseas aid, <http://www.tfsr.org>.

**More information:**

[www.recyclenow.com/start\\_recycling/at\\_work.html](http://www.recyclenow.com/start_recycling/at_work.html)

– the website is part of a national recycling campaign promoting recycling awareness and more responsible waste management.