

SUSTAINABLE OFFICE GUIDE



HARVARD
Office for Sustainability

Together, we can create a more #SustainableHarvard.

Follow these tips to help your office make informed purchasing decisions that advance Harvard's sustainability mission to accelerate action on climate, health, and equity.

1. Use resources like the Harvard Sustainable Meeting & Event Guide and Sustainable Purchasing Guide.



2. Reduce exposure to “chemical classes of concern” in purchased products.



Choose BPI-certified compostable foodservice products (made without PFAS).



When appropriate, avoid antimicrobial hand soaps, products treated for water resistance or stain-repellents, and furniture with added chemical flame retardants.

3. Purchase reusables and bulk items instead of disposables and single-use items.



4. For giveaways (“swag”), choose evergreen items people will use repeatedly.



5. Replace personal printers with shared equipment connected to a managed print environment (e.g., Crimson Print).



6. Conveniently place compost, recycling, and trash bins with the latest signage.



7. Support colleagues in implementing energy-efficient actions whenever possible such as:



Power down computers and electronics at the end of the day or before vacations.



Choose LED bulbs & install motion-sensor lights in common areas.



Ensure your community knows how to report resource conservation issues (e.g., leaking faucets) to building management.



Sign up for Demand Response notifications by emailing uos_operations@harvard.edu.



8. Work with HUIT (or local IT group) and FMO to properly dispose of electronic waste.



9. Set aside unwanted office supplies to donate to Freecycle events or reuse rooms.



10. Choose “100% recycled” or “tree-free” paper products.



Tag these tips in action with #SustainableHarvard! Questions? Email sustainability@harvard.edu.



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More details:

- Familiarize yourself [with resources](#) such as the Sustainable Meeting and Event Guide and Sustainable Purchasing Guide.
- Consider avoiding "[chemicals of concern](#)" when purchasing to ensure healthier products are selected. For example:
 - Avoid hand soaps with antimicrobial properties
 - Avoid products treated for water-resistance or stain-repellents
 - Buy furniture without added chemical flame retardants
 - If using disposable kitchen/dining products, choose BPI-certified products (which are made without PFAS chemicals)
- Replace personal printers with managed print (Crimson Print) through HUIT. Reduce paper usage by printing double-sided when possible.
- Post proper waste and recycling signage around the office; signage can be found on the [Waste and Recycling website](#). If compost is unavailable in your building, explore local compost pick-up services.
- Support colleagues in implementing energy-efficiency actions, including:
 - Powering down computers and electronics daily
 - Opting for LED bulbs and motion-sensor lighting
 - Promoting prompt reporting of resource conservation issues to building managers
 - Enroll in Demand Response notifications by emailing uos_operations@harvard.edu
- Ensure proper disposal of electronic waste by working with [Harvard University IT](#) and [Waste and Recycling Services](#) – who can provide e-waste disposal bins, signage, pickups, etc.
- Set aside unwanted office supplies and equipment to be donated at Freecycle [events](#) hosted around campus by the Office for Sustainability, Green Teams, and Harvard Waste and Recycling Services.

Tag #SustainableHarvard or email sustainability@harvard.edu a photo of any of these tips in action!



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Purchasing-Related Suggestions

- Ensure purchasers are familiar with & utilize [pre-existing resources](#) such as the Sustainable Purchasing Guide when buying products for their office.
- Prioritize purchasing 100% recycled/tree-free paper products such as printer paper, envelopes, post-it notes, and paper towels.
- Prioritize providing reusables instead of disposable items for office kitchens and events with food.
- Limit the purchase of products involving single-use packaging for office coffee machines and snacks by purchasing bean-to-cup coffee machines and bulk snack items.
- For Giveaway items, consider using the decision framework within the Sustainable Purchasing Guide to determine: whether people will actually use the item, whether it is durable or can be used again, and whether it can be made evergreen (for example: custom items can be designed with no event name/date so they can be reused at several events)

Be a good steward of this resource by posting the first page in a public/visible place in the office, share with new employees as part of onboarding, and consider devoting a staff meeting to this topic once per year.

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