



OFFICE SUSTAINABILITY

Tips for sustainable office purchasing

Sustainable purchasing considers environmental, social, and economic factors by considering the life cycle impacts of a product.

There are many ways to make your office purchasing more sustainable:

- **Consolidate all supplies:** this will provide a better inventory of available supplies and eliminate unnecessary expenditures. If there are multiple supply locations you might be spending money on items that will not be used.
- **Understand the inventory:** with more people working remotely, office supplies left in desks will not be used. Put excess supplies back in the central supply room.
- **Buy green:** ask suppliers about their sustainable products and services.
- **Minimise using materials:** archive computer files rather than print files, advertise on your website rather than in brochures, email your promotional material rather than posting it.
- **Reduce waste:** re-use old envelopes, have staff use their own mugs, get printer cartridges refilled not replaced and buy recycled stationery supplies.
- **Recycle it:** recycle everything you can't reuse - check with the council what they will recycle. Set up recycling bins in locations staff will use them. A good way to involve staff is to hold a regular office book, clothing or DVD swap day.

When considering the sustainability of your purchasing habits, it's important to look at those items that have the largest environmental impacts. Focus your efforts and attention on the items that you purchase most often or spend the most money on. You can typically make a larger impact with these items than those that are rarely purchased.

Item	Environmental Impact	Best Option	Alternative
Binders	Worn plastic binders are not recyclable. Plastics are generally made from petroleum.	Consider putting the content online. Remove this item from your purchasing list. Print with less paper (front and back, if required at all) then staple or clip rather than placing the material in binders.	Purchase recycled chipboard binders that can be composted and the metal rings can be recycled.
Flipcharts	Each page of a flipchart is the equivalent of 9 pieces of standard copy paper. A pad of 50 sheets would be a ream of paper.	Use a whiteboard instead of flip charts. Take a picture when you are done to preserve the document.	If flipcharts are required, choose recycled content.



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Markers (Dry Erase and Permanent)	Many markers contain xylene, a toxic solvent. The plastic is not recyclable.	Purchase refillable dry erase markers.	Choose non-toxic options (xylene-free).
Glue Stick	Plastic is not recyclable due to size and shape.	Often dry up before they can be used up. Keep in central storage and make sure they returned after use.	Choose a glue that is non-toxic and has plastic made from post-consumer recycled material.
Vertical Files and Manilla Folders	The vertical file is made from paper and metal. These should be reused.	Print less paper. Store documents electronically.	Purchase vertical files or manilla folders with recycled content.
Paper	Virgin paper is manufactured using considerable quantities of water, energy, chemicals and trees.	Reduce the use of paper by going digital for meeting agendas and other handouts. Set your printer to print on both sides. Use a multi-function copier and select the secured print option to eliminate unnecessary printing by requiring users to log in. Reduce font size and shrink margins to get more on the page.	Choose chlorine-free paper with recycled content. There are also papers that are made from sugar cane husks and other tree-less sources. If you want coloured paper, choose softer colours to reduce dyes required in manufacturing.
Paper Clips	Paper clips are not expensive but throwing them away is a waste of steel. Coloured paper clips use plastic over steel, creating more waste.	The ultimate reusable item. Unless it has been bent out shape and cannot be recovered or has rusted, these can be reused for a long time.	Using a paper clip 14 times is equal to 14 staples. Put the stapler away and keep a working supply of paper clips. When you are cleaning out your files, you can recover the paper clips for the next use.
Pens	Up to 140 million pens are discarded annually in Australia.	Keep in central storage and discourage personal stockpiling.	Purchase refillable pens made from post-consumer recycled content.



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Personal Printers	Personal printers waste energy (multiple devices), increase waste (multiple toners to accommodate various models) and waste money (toner expense is included in copier lease).	Evaluate your printing needs. Eliminate processes that require producing documents in favour of electronic or virtual options. Eliminate excess printers.	Use a multi-function copier for printing needs. Reduce paper use by setting copiers to 2-sided printing.
Rubber Bands	Natural rubber takes approximately 15-20 years to degrade. Synthetic takes almost twice that amount. Almost all rubber bands are made from natural rubber.	Choose natural rubber over synthetic rubber. Since rubber bands purchased in bulk will dry out over time, order a smaller supply. Resist the urge to buy more.	Use clips that have a longer life cycle.
Scissors, Staplers and Tape Dispensers	Thoughtful purchasing of these products will reduce their manufacture and subsequent greenhouse gas emissions.	A pair of scissors, a stapler and tape dispenser are no longer required at every desk. Most people seldom staple documents and even more rarely use tape. Consolidate these items by sharing between workstations or in a work room.	Consider a stapleless stapler and sharpening scissors if necessary rather than sending to landfill.
Sticky Notes	Many are sold every year. Bright colours require more dyes.	Use the back of discarded paper for scratch paper.	Choose recycled content paper. The recycled content saves trees and comes in softer colours that use less dyes.

*NSW Dept of Planning and Environment (website) : [What can I do to make my small business more sustainable? | NSW Environment and Heritage](#)

*University of Michigan: Office of Campus Sustainability