

Why Buy Recycled?

Each 20 cases of recycled paper saves 17 trees, 390 gallons of oil, 7000 gallons of water, and 4100 kwh of energy. It also eliminates 60 pounds of air-polluting emissions and saves 8 cubic feet of landfill space. That's a BIG benefit to receive for changing to a product that is as good (or better) than the product you use now!

It is no accident that the symbol for recycling is a circle of arrows. The three arrows of the recycling symbol indicate a loop, or continuous cycle. The paper recycling process includes collecting waste paper for recycling, reusing products (such as using the blank side for notes), and purchasing new paper products made from recycled content. By using recycled content products, you are "closing the loop," or completing the circle.

This is especially important for the paper industry, since 36% of the average landfill is comprised of paper. Americans discard 4 million tons of office paper each year, enough to build a 12-foot wall from Los Angeles to New York City.

With 95% of our native forests in the U.S. gone, and only 3.9% of California's old growth redwoods remaining, a change is in order. Reusing and recycling materials are only part of the effort needed to reduce the strain on environmental resources. Consumers must also purchase goods created from recycled materials in order to complete the circle.

Dispelling the Myths:

Is recycled paper high quality?

In 1998, a consortium of copier manufacturers and printers conducted a test to see how well recycled paper performed in printers, copiers, and other office equipment. Canon USA Inc., Hewlett-Packard Company, Lexmark International Inc., and the U.S. Government Printing Office tested paper with 30 percent post-consumer recycled content—the standard set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for use by Federal agencies and contractors. The verdict: Not only does recycled content paper often meet or exceed the quality standards of virgin paper, it works without complications in office equipment.



Photo by: Tammy Witschger

One Ton of 100% Recycled Paper Saves:

- 17 trees
- 7000 gallons of water
- 4100 kwh of energy, enough to power the average home for 6 months
- 60 pounds of air pollution
- 2.5 cubic yards of landfill space

Source: Department of Conservation

Can I buy bright white recycled paper?

Recycled paper is available in a wide range of colors, weights, and styles, including the brightest whites. Recycled content paper is capable of meeting the purity and brightness requirements of businesses and professionals. Newer techniques and the demand for quality paper, have created a market capable of producing the brightest whites.

It is recommended, however, that you avoid bright white paper when possible. The bleaching of paper, whether virgin or recycled, is the leading cause of toxic water pollution in the United States. Chlorine, used in the bleaching process, is a byproduct of an extremely toxic family of chemicals known as dioxins. Dioxins are linked to several human health conditions including genetic abnormalities, cancer, and reproductive disorders. The toxins are equally poisonous to plant and aquatic life. The pulp and paper industry is the leading contributor of dioxins to waterways.

You can further enhance your environmental impact by purchasing chlorine-free recycled paper. Chlorine-free paper's quality is exceptional; it simply has not been subjected to the bleaching process. The more unbleached paper purchased, the fewer toxins in our water.

Getting Started:

Are you ready to make buying recycled paper a habit in your office or home?

1. When you buy paper, look for packaging that displays the chasing arrows within a circle. This indicates that the paper contains recycled content. The symbol is often confused with the chasing arrows symbol, which simply indicates that a product may be recycled.



= Recyclable



= Made from recycled content



Photo by: Tammy Witschger

2. Look for the highest percentage of post-consumer content in the paper. Post-consumer indicates the amount of waste paper collected from consumers and reprocessed. Higher percentages are better. By buying paper with more post-consumer content, you are sending a message to the manufacturer that will encourage the reclamation and use of more recycled materials. Pre-consumer waste that may be used in recycled paper includes: paper trimmings from the paper mill and printer, and printed materials that never reach the consumer.

3. Read labels carefully! The words "environmentally friendly," "safe for the environment," and "natural," do not indicate that the product is recycled or made from recycled materials.
4. Find information on where to buy recycled products. Stores, vendors, websites and catalogs are all found in the Buy Recycled Guide at <http://www.recycleworks.org/paper.htm>
5. Learn more about recycled paper at <http://www.recycleworks.org/learnmore.htm>.
6. Learn more about purchasing policies and how to adopt a buy recycled or environmental purchasing policy in your business or agency at <http://www.recycleworks.org/business/purchasing.html>.
7. Acknowledge how your business is doing: Join the Recycled Paper Coalition <http://www.papercoalition.org/>