

Waste

Have you ever noticed the quantity of garbage generated by your operation and considered the time and money you have to spend to send it to a landfill? You can divert most of that waste by removing recyclable items, batteries and e-waste; composting food and yard organics; donating items to charities; even selling gently used items. The path to a zero-waste future starts today-with the small things.

Quick Start



Check with office supply and retail stores as to whether they accept used printer, fax or photocopier cartridges. Some companies will arrange free pickup if you are purchasing a replacement.

Case Study: A New Tide at the Bay of Fundy

[Petit Passage](#), a family-owned business located near Digby, NS, has offered whale-watching tours in the Bay of Fundy since 1994. The company's commitment to waste reduction and diversion is exemplified in its ambitious onsite composting and recycling program, which separates paper, glass and plastic. The management also reuses some materials and gives a second life to items such as ice-cream containers. It has designed waste-collection stations with clear signage, and places them near its café along with collection bins for customers. The many tourists and residents that wait near the café for the ferry to Long Island also take advantage of these containers. The company's commitment to environmental stewardship also extends to an on-board sewage-holding tank on the boats it uses for cruises; the tank allows them to pump sewage into a land-based septic system for treatment rather than pumping it out to sea.

You can find more success stories at Dalhousie University's [Eco-Efficiency Centre](#).

Try This!

Label recycling bins or use bins in different colours that are quickly recognizable, and place them in easy-to-find spots. You can even place blue recycling bins in guest rooms to encourage recycling. Provide a list of specific materials that can or cannot go into each bin and place them where they can be seen by guests and clients.

The 4Rs - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover

Canada's landfills are reaching capacity and it is becoming increasingly difficult to find sites for new ones. By following the 4Rs in order of priority listed below, you can help reduce the amount of waste, conserve resources and reduce emissions-all while saving money.

Reduce

Plastic products, including packaging materials, contribute 7% by weight and 30% by volume to municipal solid waste. By reducing the quantity of unnecessary products and non-recyclable or difficult-to-recycle materials, you can save money while helping to reduce waste sent to landfills.

Reuse

If you reuse some products for their original purpose or find a new function for them, they are no longer waste. Reusing a product allows you to save money, plus it offsets the energy that would otherwise be required to haul the product to the landfill, recycle it or manufacture a new one.

Recycle

The majority of waste sent to a landfill can be either recycled or composted. About a third of our waste is paper and paperboard while another third is yard and kitchen waste. The rest is divided among glass, metals, plastics, textiles, wood and other materials. Recycling keeps raw materials in the system and saves energy and resources. For example, recycling one tonne of newspaper saves 19 trees, three cubic metres of landfill space, 4,000 kWh of energy, 29,000 L of water and 30 kg of air pollution.

Recover

This last 'R' is geared more toward industry, in which materials or energy are recovered from waste that cannot be eliminated, reused or recycled. This provides savings in raw materials and provides a second life to existing materials.

Check out the [Waste Management Guide For Small and Medium Enterprises - Canadian Version](#)

Top Six Tips for Reducing Waste

1. **Think longevity.** Try purchasing durable, high-quality items that last for a long time and can be repaired. By spending more to buy quality appliances, furniture, etc., you save money because they last longer, plus you reduce the amount of waste you have to haul to the landfill.
2. **Pay the rent.** Why spend money on appliances that you rarely use? Consider renting instead, or cost-share with another business.
3. **Think reusable.** Instead of purchasing disposable products that get tossed into the garbage, invest in reusable containers, plates, cups, cutlery-even for outdoor activities (when feasible).
4. **Bulk up.** Consider purchasing packaged products in bulk. Reduce your costs while reducing the amount of packaging that ends up as landfill. You can also ask vendors to avoid products that have excessive amounts of packaging.
5. **Embrace digital.** Decrease your use of paper by providing information in electronic rather than print format. When printing is necessary, print double-sided and in small quantities as you need it.
6. **Skip the paper towels.** Look at installing hand dryers or use linen towel dispensers in washrooms instead of paper.

Hazardous Waste and E-waste

Batteries, paint, used motor oil, pesticides and many cleaning products are examples of common hazardous wastes. These items contain toxic ingredients and require proper disposal. Be sure to separate them from your regular garbage and do not pour them down the drain or into the storm sewer. Electronic or e-waste, such as computers, monitors, video games and keyboards may contain lead, mercury and other toxic materials.

To find a hazardous waste or e-waste collection depot in your area, search the internet by name of your city plus hazardous waste or e-waste collection. You may also find out where to take your paint and tires as well. For an example, check the [Alberta Recycling Management Authority](#).

Tool: Decision Tree-When to Reuse or Recycle

Before you toss out an item, run through the questions in this decision tree to see if you can find a new life for the product and save it from ending up in a landfill.

1. **Can you reuse the item?** Examples include refillable ink cartridges for your printer, food-storage containers that can be washed and reused, or paper that has been used on one side only and can be used as scrap paper.
2. **Can you repurpose the item?** Many plastic storage containers can be reused to store other items. Another great example is the plastic bags often used to wrap things in shipping boxes. Instead of balling these up and throwing them out, they can be used as garbage bags. Try using your imagination to find inventive ways to reuse items for new purposes.
3. **If the item is broken, can it be fixed and reused?** Items such as furniture and appliances take up a lot of space in landfills. Before you simply throw out a broken item, check whether it can be repaired. Many times the cost of repair is cheaper than a replacement. Furniture can also be given new life by a fresh coat of paint or new fabric.
4. **Might someone else use the item?** Check with your suppliers to see if they will take back shipping containers and boxes for reuse. There are also several charitable organizations that will pick up unwanted items for free. [The Salvation Army](#), [Goodwill](#) (in some Canadian locations) and the [Canadian Diabetes Association](#) accept donations of everything from clothing and sports equipment to furniture and vehicles. Local schools may also have a program for accepting used computers, and audio and video equipment. Check out [Habitat for Humanity](#) before you throw out any building materials or appliances. You'd be surprised how people can give new life to an item you thought was destined for the dumpster.

Try This!

If you don't have time to find a charitable donation program in your area, try printing a couple of signs and placing them in a high-traffic area advertising "Free Stuff!" There are also several organizations where you can place your ads for free. For example, check out [usedcanada.com](#). Or find a home for your unwanted items with [Freecycle](#). You may even find a few used items for yourself.

5. Sometimes the sum of an item's parts is greater than the whole. Some items may no longer be useful to you or anyone else in their current condition, but they may have value in pieces. For example, reusing electronic equipment parts is a burgeoning industry. Construction materials are also highly coveted. Next time you are renovating, take a few minutes to take items apart carefully so they can be reused. Items such as lighting fixtures, bricks, pipes, plumbing fixtures, carpet and lumber can all be reused. Check out [Habitat for Humanity](#) for more info.
6. None of the above? Consider recycling as a last resort. Most Canadian municipalities now offer recycling programs. Check out your municipal government's website for information on accepted materials. Likewise, divert hazardous materials from landfills by taking them to collection depots. Chemicals such as bleach, paint and oil should not be dumped down the sewer, and their containers should not go to the landfill. Take these leftover chemicals and their containers, as well as items such as batteries, to your local hazardous waste depot where they can be safely disposed.

Try This!

Save money and resources by using widely available rechargeable batteries, many of which can be reused up to 1,000 times. To find a collection site for the disposal of rechargeable batteries and cell phones, check out [Call2Recycle™](#).