

Moving Out,

Moving In

**Making Environmental Choices
When You Move**





Whether you are downsizing from a large home you've lived in your whole life to a smaller condominium, or moving to a different city, moving can be stressful, time-consuming, and expensive—and can have a great impact on the environment. Throwing away old items and buying new ones can generate a lot of trash and waste natural resources and energy.

Although throwing away all the old, unwanted items you have accumulated over the years might seem easier, there are safer, more environmentally friendly ways to get rid of these items. By taking a few extra steps, you can save money, help others, and have a positive impact on the environment.

This guide suggests environmentally safe alternatives to throwing away unwanted “junk” and shows you how to purchase new items with the environment in mind.

Moving Out

As you sort through your belongings and decide what you don't want to take with you, you will most likely run across items that have been stored in your home for some time—old toys, clothing, antiques, scrap wood, old tires, gardening equipment, automotive supplies, and other household items. Take a moment to separate those items into defined groups based on how you plan to dispose of them. For example, one group might be items that are in working order and can be reused by someone else; another group might be things that can be recycled in your community; and a third group of items might require special disposal, such as large bulky items or hazardous chemicals. See the following sections on how to identify items for reuse, recycling, and special disposal.

Reuse

When you move, many items in your home can be reused either by you or someone else. Friends, family, or local charities might be interested in the items you no longer want. Charitable donations are often tax-deductible. Options for reuse include:

- Donating books to your local school, library, or community center
- Donating furniture and other household goods to local charities
- Holding a yard sale so others can purchase and reuse your old belongings, such as old toys, tools, or household supplies
- Cleaning and selling unwanted antiques to a resale or antique shop or having an antiques dealer come to your home
- Donating large items, such as computers or cars, to local charities
- Donating food items to food banks or local shelters
- Reusing packing material, such as bubblewrap, bags, and boxes



Recycle

Many of the items you clean out from your home might be recyclable in your community curbside or drop-off recycling program. To determine what materials you can recycle, contact your local solid waste or environmental agency. Common recyclables include:

- Newspapers
- Mixed paper or white paper
- Aluminum cans
- Plastic bottles and jugs
- Steel cans
- Cardboard

Some items might be collected for recycling at other locations near you; for example:



- Plastic grocery bags are often collected for recycling at local grocery stores
- Used computers, cell phones, and other electronics are often collected for recycling at electronics stores, school vocational programs, or by municipal governments
- Bulky items, such as refrigerators and sofas, can often be picked up by your municipality with a special request



Safe Management and Disposal

You might own some common household products, such as cleaners, paints, and pesticides, that are hazardous to the environment and your health if disposed of improperly. These items contain substances that are toxic, ignitable, corrosive, or reactive and could pose health and environmental risks if disposed of in your

regular household garbage. Many communities offer special drop-off sites or periodic collection days for safe recycling or disposal of these products. Common examples include:

- Used motor oils
- Antifreeze
- Old car batteries
- Pesticides
- Leftover paints, stains, and varnishes
- Art and photographic supplies
- Cleaning supplies

Although some communities do not require you to separate these items from your regular trash, it is important to safely dispose of them. Check with your local solid waste agency to find out about safe management or disposal options in your community.



Automotive and Building Supplies

You might have a basement or garage full of items that you won't need in your new home, such as scrap wood, carpet, drywall, and car parts.

Although throwing these items away may be easier, it is important to consider alternate methods to get rid of them. There are numerous options to recycle or reuse these items. Some local recycling programs or special collection locations accept construction debris, automotive parts, and used tires. In addition, many community organizations (e.g., Habitat for Humanity) accept and can reuse these types of materials if they are in good condition.



Bulky Equipment

In your new home, you may no longer need to own large equipment such as lawnmowers and chainsaws. Because these items might contain oil or gas, throwing them away could be harmful to the environment. In addition, this equipment might have been stored

for quite some time and could be old and dirty. Taking the time to clean these items and to find a proper way to get rid of them is safer for the environment. Local environmental agencies across the country have set up programs for homeowners to trade in their old gasoline powered lawnmowers and electric equipment. Contact your local solid waste or environmental agency to inquire about these programs.



Moving In



As you are settling into your new home, you may realize that there are some new items you need. When purchasing items to stock your new home, take the time to consider whether you really need to buy everything brand new, and whether you need to purchase certain items at all. When you do go shopping, you can help protect the environment by selecting products that have a minimal impact on the environment, including those with reduced packaging or recycled content and those with less toxic ingredients.



Reduce

You can reduce the amount of waste you generate in the long run by carefully

considering what you buy and how you use items around your home. When deciding what items you might need for your new home, consider whether you can rent, borrow, or share items with family, friends, and neighbors instead of purchasing them. Also consider options for buying durable and reusable products rather than disposable ones or products that contain minimal packaging, such as concentrated items or items in bulk.



Options for buying less include:

- Purchasing and using cloth napkins and towels instead of disposable ones
- Forgoing disposable utensils and instead using sturdy, washable ones for large gatherings
- Buying products in bulk, in concentrate, or in refillable containers
- Using rechargeable batteries
- Using cloth grocery bags instead of paper or plastic
- Avoiding products with excessive packaging material
- Sharing newspapers and magazines with friends and family
- Renting or borrowing large items such as tools, ladders, and rug cleaners
- Performing routine maintenance on large appliances to extend their usable life
- Purchasing low-energy fluorescent light bulbs that last longer
- Purchasing ENERGY STAR® products—such as appliances—that provide superior energy efficiency

Buy Environmentally Friendly Products

Environmentally friendly products include those that contain recycled

materials as well as less toxic alternatives. By buying products containing recycled materials, you are helping to “close the recycling loop,” which means you are supporting the products and markets that use the materials others have recycled.

Examples of products containing recycled-content materials include:

- Paper products (notepads, tissues, paper towels, computer paper)
- Plastic products (fleece jackets, landscape materials, trash bags)
- Personal products (t-shirts, brushes)
- Home products (carpet, trash bags, storage bins, furniture, appliances)
- Home repair products (recycled-content siding, recycled-content asphalt/felt or aluminum roofing shingles, wallboard, ceiling tiles, doors)
- Lawn and garden materials (bird feeders, landscape timbers, planters, garden hoses)
- Automotive products (car parts, ice scrapers, oil pans)



You can reduce the amount of household hazardous waste you generate by using less toxic alternatives in your home.

Such alternatives include:

- Natural pesticides or alternative products that achieve the same results
- Natural or less toxic cleaning products such as citrus-based cleaners
- Non-toxic inks and art supplies for children
- Natural alternatives to mothballs
- Natural alternatives to pet products such as flea and tick remedies
- Pump spray personal products instead of aerosol



For More Information

Donation

- **America's Car Donation Charities Center –**
www.donateacar.com

Contains information and links to car donation resources.

Recycling and Reuse

- **Appliance Recycling Centers of America –**
www.arcainc.com

Contains information and statistics on appliance recycling.

- **Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers –**
www.aham.org/aric/aric.cfm#information

Contains information on appliance recycling.

- **Earth 911 –** www.earth911.org or 1-800-Cleanup
Useful resource containing information on environmental issues, along with information on community recycling and reuse.

- **Electronic Industries Alliance –** www.eiae.org
The Consumer Education Initiative provides information on national and local recycling and reuse programs.

- **EPA Recycling Publications –**
www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/recpubs.htm

- **National Recycling Coalition's Resources for Recyclers –**
www.nrc-recycle.org/resources/resources.htm

- **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Waste Reduction and Recycling Program** – www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dshw/redrecy
Contains information and publications on a wide variety of solid waste topics.
- **Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle** – www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/reduce.htm
EPA Web site dedicated to providing information on how to produce less waste by practicing the 3 Rs.
- **Resource Conservation Challenge – Plug-In To eCycling** – www.epa.gov/osw/conserves/plugin/index.htm
Provides information on opportunities to reuse and recycle old computers, televisions, and cell phones. Web site includes links to collections events.
- **The Consumer's Handbook for Reducing Solid Waste** – www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/catbook.htm

Buying Recycled Products


- **Center for Resourceful Building Technology** – www.crbt.org
Dedicated to promoting environmentally responsible construction practices, contains information on recycled-content building products and environmental building technologies.
- **EPA's Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program** – www.epa.gov/oppt/epp
Includes a database of environmental information for products and services. Contains information on household items that can be purchased.



United States
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EPA-530-K-04-002
February 2004



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