



## Reducing waste from office supplies

The Government has made it a priority to reduce waste from the goods and services it buys.

This is supported by [Rule 20](#) of the Government Procurement Rules, which designates office supplies contracts as a priority focus for reducing waste.

The All-of-Government Office supplies contract will be renewed in 2021. Suppliers will need to show they are committed to supporting sustainability and reducing waste to be included in the panel that supplies the contract. Until then, try using some of the following tips to help you reduce your office supply waste.

### Waste reduction policy

If you don't already have one, consider putting in place a waste reduction policy. Make sure it includes your agency's position on office supplies. The best thing you can do to reduce waste is use fewer supplies. But where you can, you can also use supplies that are made from sustainable resources and/or are recyclable.

#### Reduce your consumption

If practical you may wish to consider reducing the accessibility of stationary in your offices, and reducing the number of printers you have. This might include reducing the number of stationary bays.

Making stationery and printers less available can help to reduce unnecessary use and waste. This is good not only for the environment, but can save money too.

*Making office supplies less available works on the same principle as removing single use plastic bags from supermarkets, or placing high sugar foods in less accessible aisles. If you make it harder to do something, in this case waste office supplies, you can reduce the number of times it happens.*

#### Consider sharing distribution services with nearby agencies

Think about working with other agencies in your area to share distribution services. This can work well for agencies that are close to each other. It can also reduce the amount of packaging waste where orders and deliveries are combined.

#### Reducing paper waste

Most agencies are already taking action to reduce paper waste, such as:

- making double-sided and black and white printing default settings
- storing documents electronically, instead of keeping physical copies
- using emails or intranets to share information with staff, instead of paper documents
- using emails to share information with customers rather than letters
- re-labelling envelopes when using them for internal mail.

If you're not already using these practices, putting them in place can be a quick way to reduce your waste and save you money.

You can choose to do more by buying recycled paper, reusing it when possible, and then shredding it so it can be recycled again.

Talk to your suppliers about any environmentally friendly options they have for disposing of paper waste, such as recycling.

### **Encouraging staff to reduce paper waste**

Make it easy for staff to be 'paperless' by providing them with alternative options, such as laptops and portable devices. And encourage them to reduce paper waste by:

- taking laptops or devices to meetings, rather than print-outs
- editing drafts before printing them, so they don't need to print so many draft copies
- using single spacing and narrower margins for unofficial documents.

### **Reducing other office waste**

Although most office waste is paper waste, there are other kinds of waste you need to consider, like packaging and office consumables, such as toners.

### **Work with suppliers to reduce waste**

Ask your suppliers about any low-waste options they offer. This can include the products they sell, the way they are packaged, and the way they will be delivered to you. This encourages more sustainable practices.

Where you can:

- change to lower-waste office products
- buy products with less packaging or with no packaging at all
- ask for your supplies to be delivered in containers you can return to the supplier.

### **Other ways to reduce office waste**

- Make the most of your ink and toner cartridges – don't replace them before you need to.
- Assess which products you need, and which are surplus to your requirements. It may be that you're buying products you don't really need.
- When thinking about buying a new item, consider how often you'll use it – if you won't use it very much, it may be that you can rent the item as and when you need it.
- Make sure the higher-cost products you buy are fit-for-purpose, good quality, and can be repaired at a reasonable cost.
- Consider whether you can re-purpose or donate items you no longer need, instead of throwing them away.