

*Guide to Recycling,
Composting, and
Zero Waste at Harvard*



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Table of Contents

- A Message from Harvard Recycling—3
- The Ultimate Goal: Zero Waste—4
- SingleStream Recycling—5
- Surplus Distribution—6
- E-Waste—7
- Composting—Recycling Nature’s Way—8
- Frequently Asked Questions—9



Recycling by the numbers....

- Harvard’s recycling rate is 55% and climbing—Highest in the Ivy League!
- Each year, the Harvard community recycles 4,700 tons of paper, cans, bottles, computers, etc.
- Nearly 4,000 tons of compostables, including food scraps and landscape waste, are recovered annually.

Help us reach Zero Waste by 2020!

A Message from Harvard Recycling

Over the past 20 years, Harvard's recycling rate has risen from 5% to 55% - an outstanding accomplishment that was only made possible by the extraordinary efforts of all students, faculty, and staff. While we should certainly be proud of this incredible achievement—we can do even better!

Harvard Recycling is laying down a new challenge - Zero Waste by 2020. How can we as a campus community achieve this? First, we can recycle and compost more of our trash. We know from our waste audits that about 30% of what we discard is recyclable paper, bottles, cans and cardboard. Compostable food scraps and soiled paper represents another 25%. If we captured only half of this, we'd bring our recycling rate up to 80%! Here are some of the benefits we get from recycling and composting:

- Resources conserved by recycling reduce the need for mining, oil drilling and forest exploitation
- On a per pound basis, Recycling employs eight times more people than traditional disposal
- Using recovered resources instead of virgin materials reduces our carbon footprint. The US EPA estimates that 38% of our carbon emissions are from mining and manufacturing goods and growing, harvesting and processing food.
- Donations of Harvard's surplus goods helps more than 200 charities and needy individuals in Cambridge, Boston, and beyond.
- Composting reduces the release of methane and provides organic nutrients for farms and our campus grounds.

To get all the way to Zero Waste, we will have to buy more wisely, work with our suppliers to reduce packaging, and buy only what we will use. We need to donate surplus to other departments and the needy. Finally, let's take to heart the slogan of the Berkeley Ecology Center: "If it can't be reduced, reused, rebuilt, refurbished, refinished, resold, recycled or composted, then it should be restricted, redesigned or removed from production."

Thank you all for what has been accomplished so far. Please join me as we tackle new goals and set our recycling sights even higher!



*Rob Gogan, Associate Manager
Recycling and Waste Services*

The Ultimate Goal: Zero Waste

To achieve Zero Waste, all material must be reused or recycled back into the natural environment. This is not an easy task, however the Harvard community has proven it's possible. Over the past few years, many Zero Waste events have been held across the University with impressive results! If you would like to make strides towards achieving zero waste, begin by following the steps below. Good Luck!

STEPS TOWARDS ACHIEVING ZERO 0 WASTE

- Only buy items that can be reused, recycled, or composted.
- Instead of buying computers, monitors, copiers, appliances, and furniture, see if these items can be leased to encourage re-use.
- Before buying a new product, see if a co-worker, colleague, or friend has one you can borrow.
- Purchase items with the least amount of packaging.
- When purchasing a bulk item, ask the retailer to take back the old one.
- Reuse, rebuild, refurbish, refinish, re-sell, or donate all surplus items.



SingleStream Recycling

Harvard University employs SingleStream recycling meaning all recyclable material, including paper, boxes, bottles, cans, and containers can be mixed together in the same recycling bin, barrel, or bag—no need to separate! This system takes the guesswork out of recycling and makes the process easier. Recycled items are shipped to a facility in Charlestown, MA where they are separated into 12 saleable products, baled up, and loaded for delivery to recycling mills in Massachusetts, across North America and around the world. Here is a brief description of the items that should be included in SingleStream recycling:

- **Paper**—Includes newspaper, office paper, magazines, mail, cardboard, books, notes, folders. Staples, paper clips, rubber bands, labels & stamps can be included.
- **Bottles, Cans & Containers**—Includes food, beverage, and laundry containers made of plastic (with #1-7 resin ID recycling logo stamped on the bottom; see below), glass, or metal. Also includes cups, plates & containers (with #1-7 resin ID recycling logo stamped on the bottom; see below). Loose caps, buckets, trays, empty aerosol cans can be included. However, try to avoid adding visible food or beverage residue.

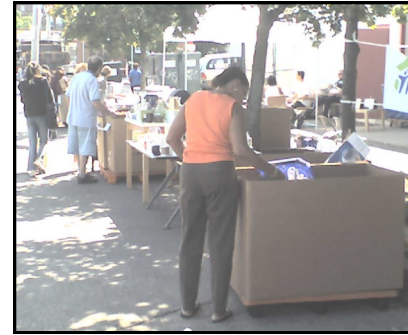


- **Boxes**—Made of corrugated cardboard or paper board flattened (if possible) and empty. It's acceptable if a box contains tape, staples, labels, or is slightly damp.

The graphic features a blue recycling bin with a white recycling symbol on top. Above the bin, the text "SingleStream RECYCLING" is displayed. To the left of the bin, the phrase "recycle it together" is written above an illustration of various recyclable items (paper, cardboard, metal cans, glass bottles, plastic containers) being placed into the bin. To the right of the bin, a list titled "RECYCLE TOGETHER ALL:" includes: paper, cardboard, metal cans & foils, glass bottles & jars, and plastic containers #1-7. Below the list, a red note says "Please minimize food & beverage residue before recycling." At the bottom of the graphic, a blue banner contains the text "Together, we'll make a difference! Thanks for reducing, reusing and recycling!"

Surplus Distribution

Harvard Recycling provides more than 200 schools, police departments, houses of worship, community centers, and homeless shelters across the Boston area with useful items. Every Thursday from 11 AM to 2 PM at 175 North Harvard Street, we hold a Surplus Distribution where we give away tons of furniture, office supplies, refrigerators, and other equipment on a first-come, first-served basis!



If you would like to donate to our Surplus Distribution program, contact your building or facility manager.

Annual Donations by the Numbers...

281

Tons of Office Furniture



100+

Personal Computers



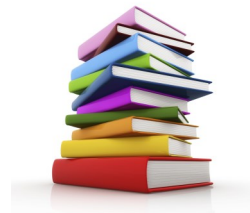
315

Pairs of Crutches



8

Tons of Books



22

Tons of Clothing



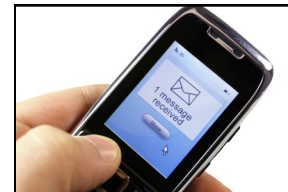
Electronic Waste

Recycling extends far beyond just paper, cans, and bottles. Computers, batteries, light bulbs, DVD's, and cell phones are also recycleable. In fact, many of these items often contain dangerous and toxic substances, so it's very important to recycle them properly. Outlined below is the simple step for ensuring these types of items don't wind up in a landfill.

SMALL, HAND HELD ITEMS



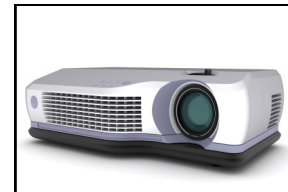
All of these items should be bagged and placed inside "Batteries Plus Buckets," which are located in some recycling rooms and your Building Manager's office.



LARGER, BULK ITEMS



Many of these products are re-used, donated to needy organizations, or recycled. Speak with your Building Manager who can coordinate the proper disposal.



Composting: Recycling Nature's Way

Composting diverts organic waste from landfills and returns valuable nutrients and organisms to plants and soils. Each year at the Facilities Maintenance Operations Compost Facility in the Arnold Arboretum, Landscape Services converts more than 500 tons of leaves, grass clippings, tree branches, and other landscape waste into compost and mulch. This material is reintroduced to the Harvard landscape through FMO's Organic Landscaping Program.



The FMO Composting Facility in the Arnold Arboretum

Food scraps from nearly all food preparation facilities at Harvard are composted as well. Plus, many University Cafés offer “front of the house” composting including the [Chauhaus](#) at the Graduate School of Design, Rockefeller Refectory at the Divinity School, the Greenhouse at the Science Center, the Barker Center Café, [Harkness Commons](#) at the Law School, [Sebastian's](#) at the School of Public Health and others. Most of the compostable material gathered from the dining facilities is delivered to farms on the North Shore.



WHAT CAN YOU COMPOST?

- FOOD SCRAPS including coffee grounds including paper filters, tea bags, fruit peels & seeds, unconsumed food including meat & bones.
- PLANTS & LEAVES including houseplants & soil, yard waste, and flowers.
- SOILED PAPER and utensils including napkins, paper towels, compostable service-ware with a [BPI “Compostable” seal](#), paper take-out food boxes, wood chopsticks, wood coffee stirrers.



Frequently Asked Questions

One of our goals is to make recycling as easy as possible for the entire Harvard community. However, there are bound to be some lingering questions about how to handle certain items. Below are answers to some of the most frequently asked questions.

1. Do I have to separate paper from bottles & cans?



No, SingleStream recycling is standard at Harvard. That means paper and boxes can be mixed with bottles and cans in the same recycling bin.

2. What do I do with bottle caps?



Caps can be left on the bottles from which they came. Just be sure to drain all liquid from the bottle before closing.

3. Can I recycle pizza boxes, even with food stains on them?



Yes, but don't leave leftover food inside the box. That material can be composted.

4. Can I recycle paper coffee cups? What about foam coffee cups?



Yes, the cups along with paper hot-sleeves and plastic lids can be recycled. Please be sure to discard any liquids, stirrers, tea bags or other debris before placing in the recycling bin. Foam cups *cannot* be recycled.

5. Can I recycle any plastic that has a recycling sign and number on it?



Harvard now recycles every type of plastic - numbers one through seven. If the plastic has a recycling symbol on it, you can throw it in the recycle bin, regardless of the number. Solo cups are now recyclable, too!

Frequently Asked Questions *(cont.)*

6. What should I do with plastic shopping bags?



Reuse them, because there is no system for recycling plastic bags. But try to avoid using them in the first place by carrying a reusable bag or backpack.

7. What if I don't have a recycling bin?



Each residential suite and office should be outfitted with recycle bins. If yours doesn't, let your REP or Building Manager know. To find your REP, visit the Resource Efficiency Program web site:

www.green.harvard.edu/rep. For offices, visit www.uos.harvard.edu/fmo/recycling/containers.

8. What happens to donated furniture, computers, clothes, etc?



Many items brought to a Donation Station are donated to Harvard Habitat for Humanity (HHH). In late summer, HHH sells these items—generating money for the program while greatly reducing unnecessary waste! Clothing is sold to The Garment District and the proceeds are donated to student charities. On average, students who organize donation drives earn up to \$20 per hour for their groups. For more information, please contact Harvard FMO Recycling if you want to raise funds this way.

9. What should I do with my laundry detergent bottle?



Recycle it! Just drain, re-cap it and drop it in the bin!

10. How can I compost on campus?



Food waste left on dining hall trays is sent to a compost farm. Thus leaving organic waste on your tray will, most likely, mean it is composted! Many cafes on campus such as the Science Center Greenhouse now serve on compostable plates and offer collection bins for organic compostables. So send those food scraps, napkins and plates back to the farm to fertilize next year's harvest!