

TIPS ON HOW TO Incorporate reuse in the workplace

Working from home and hybrid workplaces have offered a lot of opportunities for more sustainable work (e.g. reduced emissions from commuting and heating/cooling office buildings, etc.). Use these tips to continue prioritizing reuse in your workplace(s) whether at home or in the office!

Tips

- Adopt a sustainable meeting policy that prioritizes reuse
- Create reuse systems around the building
- Adopt a sustainable purchasing policy that prioritizes reuse
- Switch to reusables in the kitchen and cafeteria
- Post reuse tips and messaging



Strategies to follow

• Adopt a sustainable meeting policy that prioritizes reuse

Creating a sustainable meeting guide and adopting a formal office-wide policy is a great way to set expectations, establish consistent steps, and communicate sustainability as a leading priority for your organization or business. Include the following principles in your policy:

- Include a message about the organization's commitment to sustainability in all meeting invites
 - If serving food, ask attendees to bring their own water bottles, utensils, napkins, or plates; provide cups, mugs, plates, napkins, and utensils if someone doesn't have their own
 - Bring food in reusable containers or if the meeting is catered, communicate to the caterer that reusables are required
 - Supply pitchers of tap water or inform attendees where refill stations are located
 - Email meeting agendas and materials instead of printing
 - Use technology or more reuse-friendly approaches (e.g. white board instead of a paper/sticky-notes) for brainstorming and discussion activities
 - Use reusable name tag holders and collect them at the end for reuse
 - Make signage reusable by omitting years, locations, and specific details
 - Avoid handing out "swag" and instead, try giving experiences or consumables
- ### • Create reuse systems
- Establish "sharing tables" in break rooms for extra food, desk items, and household items.
 - Set up a reusable bag station where employees can grab a reusable bag if they're headed to the store after work and forgot their bags at home. Ask employees to return the bags they use.
 - Create office supplies reuse cabinets where staff can keep shareable office supplies and place surplus items. Collect scratch paper and encourage employees to use this instead of notepads.
 - Work with vendors to explore reusable packaging options instead of using cardboard boxes.



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Incorporate reuse in the workplace

- **Adopt a sustainable purchasing policy that prioritizes reuse**

A sustainable purchasing policy can support employees and buyers with knowing the best options for reducing the impacts of purchases. Policies should set specific goals for sustainable purchasing, and identify third-party certifications or eco-labels and criteria that need to be met for new purchases. It should also communicate key steps to take first before deciding to purchase new:

- If the item or equipment is broken or not working as expected, are there options to repair or refurbish it?
- If a replacement or “new” item is needed, is there an extra or surplus option available in the organization/business? Is there an option to rent the item (especially if it isn’t used as frequently or long-term)? Is there a secondhand option available through a reuse retailer?
- If reuse isn’t an option, new purchases can be made intentionally with reuse and repair in mind. Help employees purchase durable products that also have replacement parts, tools, and manuals available to allow for fixes in the future.

- **Switch to reusables in the kitchen/break rooms and cafeteria**

- Save money by eliminating the purchase of single-use plates, cups, utensils, and napkins (including compostable or recyclable options). In the kitchen/break room, have a supply of reusables that employees can use for meals, including hand and dish towels. Establish a system for loading/emptying the dishwasher or hand-washing dishes, and a rotation for employees bringing the hand and dish towels home for washing.
- If there is concern about eliminating single-use, propose a phased approach where employees have to purchase the disposable items if they don’t bring their own or use one of the reusable options.
- Create reusable kits that include plates, cups/mugs, utensils and napkins. Employees can check out the kits to use for their meetings/events, and then wash and return them after.
- Remove vending machines and instead add water bottle refilling stations and healthier, more sustainable food/snack options.

- **Post reuse tips and messaging**

- A big part of implementing more reuse in the workplace is by showing it is a part of the culture and a way to be a part of the community. Create signs throughout the workplace to remind and affirm the actions your employees are taking to reuse more.

Additional resources

Resources and model for developing a sustainable purchasing policy from the Sustainable Purchasing Leadership Council (SPLC), <https://www.sustainablepurchasing.org/model-policy/>

Ditching Disposables: A Toolkit for Healthier Foodware in K-12 Schools from the Center for Environmental Health (CEH), <https://ceh.foleon.com/ceh/ditching-disposables-toolkit/>

