

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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MOVING OUT: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (and Responsible Disposal)

Nothing like a move to truly test your sustainability game at home. Moving usually means cleaning out many items that you would rather not take with you, and as you dig deeper into closets, the basement, and garage, these items mount up. The donation pile and garbage pile begin to expand and overtake your space. And then there are the things that are questionable: Can I donate this? Can I throw this in the trash or do I have to take it somewhere?

Depending on the amount of time you have to pack and move, it can be very tempting to just chuck most things into the garbage and move on. There's also all of the extra things you need for a move: boxes, tape, packing materials. Before you get lost in a wasteful cycle when moving, here are some things to think about before you get started:

PACKING

You're going to need boxes, yes, but before you go buying new ones, consider these options:

- Look around your home for anything that can be used to carry your stuff – suitcases, closet totes, laundry hampers, etc., to reduce the number of boxes you'll need. Use garbage bags to pack clothes, but make sure not to stretch the bags too much so you can still use them in your new home.
- Find your boxes from neighbors or local groups; there are many online yard sale groups you can post on to find some.
- Check with your local supermarket or state liquor store for unwanted boxes you can take off of their hands.
- For packing materials, use newspaper, towels or even clothes to wrap up fragile items.

When done with your boxes, pay them forward. You can also [use them for garden beds](#) or build a cat box. If you can't get rid of them and can't use them for anything else, then recycle them.

BEWARE OF WISHCYCLING

Goodwill New England [announced this spring that it had over \\$1 million in trash fees](#) for the past year because of the unusable donated items that it had to dispose of. Just like your solid waste facility asks you to pay attention to what you are recycling, so as not to contaminate the process and make it more expensive for them, donation centers need you to do the same.

It's called "wishcycling," when good-intentioned people don't want to throw things in the trash so they try to either recycle or donate as much as they can. Sometimes the only thing you can do is trash it. When eyeing something for the donation pile, consider these things:

- Make sure it's useable. Think to yourself, "Could I still use this if I wanted it?" If it's Tupperware with holes in it, probably not. A plastic drawer organizer with no drawers, unlikely. If it's

unusable, the next step is to determine if it is recyclable, and if not, dispose of it in the trash or at your local transfer station.

- Some unusable things can still be donated; most notably, textiles or anything made of fabric: curtains, sheets, blankets, clothes and towels, for example. Places like Goodwill will reuse or recycle those types of items. So go ahead and throw in that jumble of mismatched socks!

Aside from large donation centers, you can rehome your items by posting them on an online message board or checking with local charities that help families in transition.

CHECK FOR HAZARDOUS WASTES

Many common household products, such as paints, solvents, drain openers, oven cleaners, polishes, waxes, pesticides, cleaning agents and spent automotive products, [have hazardous properties](#). If not removed from your home, the disposal costs may be deducted from the sale price of your home or from your security deposit. In addition, your mover is not allowed to transport hazardous chemicals to your new home. Some things to consider for handling any household hazardous waste:

- Identify which items are hazardous household wastes and set aside what you will use up before you move or will personally transport to your new home.
- Ask the new resident, friends or neighbors if they want any of the remaining products.
- Check with your city or town as to when the next household hazardous waste collection day will be held, and take any remaining waste to the collection.

Do **NOT** dispose of any chemicals, petroleum products, or other hazardous wastes by flushing or pouring them down the drain, or onto the ground. **It is against the law.** For more information, check out these [fact sheets](#).

CLEANING TIME

Once all of your stuff is out, it's time to clean it! This is where it can typically get wasteful, with a multitude of cleaning products and disposable wipes, etc. It doesn't have to be! With a little careful forethought, you can keep the trash to a minimum. For example:

- Save a few old wash cloths or T-shirts that you culled from your belongings and use them for cleaning, instead of using paper towels or other disposable options.
- [Make your own cleaner](#), which will cut down on potential toxins AND on the plastic waste from the cleaning product bottles.
- Before you buy any cleaning products, make sure you do a full inventory of what you already have. You might be surprised what you find deep in your closet or under the sink.

Make sure to carry over these tips to your new place, too!

Moving is always a bit stressful, and it can be tempting to drop our positive lifestyle habits in exchange for ease and convenience, but with a little pre-planning and lots of deep breaths you can drastically reduce your waste during the process. Move into your new space feeling good about your choices!

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