

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Sustainable Office Guide



2020-2021



Office of Sustainability
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Thank You for Your Interest in Office Sustainability!

The Green Office intern team at the UW-Madison Office of Sustainability has created this document to provide a general overview for individuals and offices who are interested in learning more about sustainability and how they can best create an impact on campus.

As a part of the Green Office program, this document is structured by topic area: **Waste Management, Energy, Water, Purchasing, and Community Engagement**. Since the Office of Sustainability is part of UW-Madison, many of the resources mentioned in the document below reflect our knowledge about office spaces on campus or in the Madison area. For other locations, please be aware that information such as waste stream guidelines will differ depending on municipality. Please reach out to your local services to understand the systems in your area.

If you are interested in learning more about the Green Office Certification Program or other resources, please visit [our website](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, please email the Green Office team at: [**greenoffice@g-groups.wisc.edu**](mailto:greenoffice@g-groups.wisc.edu)

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Waste Management

When it comes to a physical office space, there are many elements over which employees lack direct control. Waste management, however, is an area where employees have some autonomy. You can interact with waste in a multitude of ways, from what you choose to bring into an office to how you dispose of it. The classic sustainability advice is Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Of these interactions, Reduce is the most impactful method for managing waste.

Waste

Try to reduce waste at the source. There are many small “fixes” that can add up to greatly reduced waste in an office space.

- ❑ To reduce paper waste, set office printers to print double-sided by default. Also, create a scrap paper pile for reuse before recycling it.
- ❑ To avoid paper use in general, try to move to digital documents. For instance, the next time you host a meeting consider making the agenda a shared digital document as opposed to printing a copy for everyone.
- ❑ Bring your own reusable plates and silverware to office events where food is provided (and encourage your co-workers to do the same).

Recycling

- ❑ Educate yourself on the different waste streams that are present at your office to ensure what is being recycled is actually recyclable.
 - ❑ UW-Madison has five different waste streams: Trash-to-Landfill, Mixed Paper, Office Paper, Commingled Recycling (glass, cans, plastic), and Compost. This likely differs from what you are accustomed to at home.
 - ❑ When you are not sure where an item should go, put it in the trash. Otherwise, it can contaminate the whole recycling system.
 - ❑ Remember the saying, “When in doubt, throw it out”.
- ❑ If you need to replace computer equipment, consider giving the old equipment to donation centers or non-profit organizations.
 - ❑ If donating is not possible and your office is part of the UW-Madison campus, you can recycle electronics through [UW-DoIT](#) at the Computer Sciences building located on 1210 W. Dayton St. Another resource at UW-Madison is Surplus With A Purpose (SWAP) where

they accept unwanted items such as computer equipment. Check out the e-guidelines [here](#).

- ❑ If donating is not possible and you are located off-campus, you can recycle electronics in Madison at 4602 Sycamore Ave. and 1501 W. Badger Rd.
 - ❑ Note: You cannot recycle electronics on the curb, and these drop off sites require a \$10 fee.
- ❑ Outside of the Madison area, look into recycling programs through your local government. Or, check out major national retailers like Best Buy to see if they accept old or broken electronics for recycling.

Compost

- ❑ Where possible, compost food scraps to cut down on your carbon footprint.
- ❑ Create a weekly takeout schedule to start a compost bin.
- ❑ Reach out to the UW-Madison Office of Sustainability to learn more about the Green Office Certification and Compost Stewards Program!



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Energy

In an office space, you might not be able to control all of the energy your office building uses. However, there are some small things that you can do that will make a difference.

Devices and Appliances:

- ❑ Turn off devices and appliances when not in use.
 - ❑ Ensure all computers, printers, and appliances (except for refrigerators) are switched off at the end of each day--not just in “sleep mode”.
- ❑ Use smart strips or switch-activated powerstrips when possible.
 - ❑ Some appliances draw power while turned off. This is called *ghost power*. Some of the biggest culprits of *ghost power* are microwaves and Keurigs.
 - ❑ If a smart strip or switch-activated power strip is not possible, unplug devices and appliances when not in use.
- ❑ When purchasing new appliances, select Energy Star appliances and compare models to see which uses the least energy.
 - ❑ [Energy Star](#) appliances are products that have met the energy efficiency requirements placed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- ❑ For Kitchen appliances, we recommend setting the fridge between 35-38 °F and the freezer to 0 °F.

Lighting:

- ❑ Ensure lights are switched off when leaving individual office spaces for an extended period of time and when the last person leaves for the day.

Heating and Cooling:

- ❑ If you have control over your office thermostat, set your thermostat to 78°F in the summer months and 68°F in the winter.
 - ❑ This can save anywhere between 5%-15% on utility costs.
 - ❑ Setting your thermostat at an optimal temperature keeps your employees comfortable and focused. If the thermostat is too hot or too cold, employees may bring their own devices to keep cool/warm which can drive up energy costs and overload outlets.
- ❑ During the winter, avoid space heaters if possible. During the summer, open windows or close blinds before turning on the air conditioner.

- ❑ If the air conditioner is running, close all of the windows.

Water

Water Conservation

For those of you living in Wisconsin, it may seem as though there is an ample supply of fresh water from the many lakes. However, fresh water is a limited resource and should not be abused.

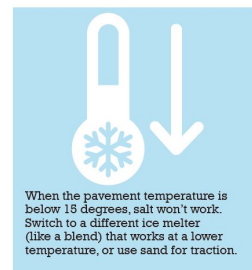
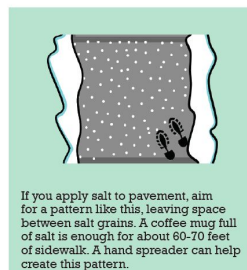
- ❑ Only brew the amount of coffee that will be consumed by the office staff. Consider freezing any leftover coffee in ice cube trays so that people can enjoy non-diluted iced coffee.
- ❑ Be conscious of your water usage when washing dishes or your hands.
 - ❑ If your office has a dishwasher, only run the dishwasher when it is full.
 - ❑ Do not run the faucet continuously while washing your hands or dishes.
- ❑ Check sinks and toilets regularly for leaks, and service them as soon as possible

Winter Salt Use on Campus

A teaspoon of salt can permanently pollute 5 gallons of fresh water, and chloride cannot be removed naturally by aquatic organisms.

- ❑ Educate yourself and co-workers on the impacts of salting and utilize proper techniques.
 - ❑ Let custodial staff and building managers salt areas around the office as they have been trained in how to salt properly.
 - ❑ Only request extra saltings when it is necessary.
 - ❑ Salt won't work when the pavement temperature is below 15 degrees. However, sand, which is used to create traction, can help.
- ❑ Visit [Wisconsin Salt Wise](#) to learn more about the environmental and economical implications of over-salting.

1. Shovel 2. Scatter 3. Switch



Purchasing

When thinking about sustainability, we often focus on the three Rs of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. However, the products we buy also create an environmental and social footprint. Below are general tips and guidelines to help your office become more conscious about what it consumes.

Resources at UW-Madison that support sustainable purchasing:

- ❑ Check [SWAP](#) if you are looking to get rid of or purchase new items for your office. SWAP is a department within Purchasing Services that collects unused or unwanted items from departments on campus. SWAP either finds these items a new home with another department or sells them to the public.
 - ❑ SWAP is only available for UW-Madison departments.

General Sustainable Purchasing Practices

- ❑ Look for products with low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) contents as VOCs can negatively affect indoor air quality.
 - ❑ Some common sources of VOCs include copiers, printers, permanent markers, photographic solutions, correction fluids, carbonless copy paper, and aerosol sprays.
- ❑ Choose a higher quality product rather than the most inexpensive option. Higher quality products will often last longer than the cheapest option, which will reduce environmental waste and save your office money in the long run.
 - ❑ For instance, instead of using Alkaline or Lithium batteries, which are no longer recyclable, consider using rechargeable batteries that last 200x longer.
- ❑ When purchasing new computers, purchase EPEAT (Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool)-registered products. EPEAT products meet environmental criteria that address the computer's entire lifecycle.
 - ❑ Common products that meet EPEAT criteria: Apple Mac mini, Apple MacBook Air, Apple 16-inch MacBook Pro, Apple 13-Inch MacBook Pro, Dell OptiPlex 3050 Micro, OptiPlex 3050 SFF, OptiPlex 3050 Tower.
 - ❑ If you would like to see if your equipment meets the criteria, visit [this link](#).

Eco-labels

- ❑ Consider buying eco-labeled or second-hand products rather than conventional products. When looking at eco-labels, choose products that have reputable sustainability certifications.
 - ❑ Fair Trade certified items mean that the people making the products are working in safe conditions and receiving fair wages. Fair Trade items are also produced with the environment in mind and are produced sustainably in communities.
 - ❑ Examples of items that are Fair Trade include: Unreal Chocolate, Endangered Species Chocolate, Numi Tea, Equal Exchange Tea, Guayaki Tea, Allegro Coffee, and Kickapoo Coffee,
 - ❑ Local stores that support Fair Trade efforts include: [Serrv](#), [Fair Trade Coffee House](#), [Willy Street Coop](#), [Regent Street Coop](#). Also check out [Colectivo's Organic and Fair Trade](#) line of coffee.
 - ❑ B-Corp certified companies are certified by a third party organization that ensures businesses meet standards for social, environmental and economic sustainability. Learn more about B-Corps [here](#).
 - ❑ 1% for the Planet members are businesses or individuals that promise to donate 1% of their annual sales or earnings to a vetted list of non-profit organizations. To see a list of companies committed to giving back or to learn more about the 1% for the Planet mission, visit [their website](#).
- ❑ Remember to shop locally first. Shopping locally reduces emissions caused by long-distance transportation. Items created in other countries may have less strict environmental laws. Shopping locally also helps support your office's community!

Look For These Sustainability Trends

Reusable Products



Rechargeable Products



Resale Products



Durable Items



Recycled Products



Energy efficient appliances



Community Engagement

Often, in the environmental movement, people talk about sustainability in regards to “saving the planet” or stopping global warming. Sustainability, however, also incorporates the health and well-being of communities. When trying to make an office more sustainable, it is also important to think about the office’s relationship with its community members.

Social and Environmental Justice

- ❑ Educate yourself about implicit biases and their impact. Consider hosting a social justice training session with your co-workers.
 - ❑ For those at UW-Madison, reach out to the [Social Justice Hub](#) and the [Multicultural Student Center \(MSC\)](#) for access to resources and training events:
 - ❑ If you ever need to report a hate or bias incident that occurred on campus please visit: [Hate and Bias Resources](#).
 - ❑ To explore implicit biases by yourself, look into Implicit bias tests like [this one](#) from researchers at Harvard.
- ❑ Help support local organizations by volunteering your time or donating money. This is a great opportunity to connect to your local community and bond with your co-workers.
 - ❑ Madison Area Organizations:
 - ❑ [The Farley Center](#): a nonprofit focusing on peace, social justice, sustainability, nature preserves, and natural burials.
 - ❑ [Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin](#): The largest foodbank of Southeastern Wisconsin and a member of Feeding America, Second Harvest works with local communities to rescue food and fight hunger.
 - ❑ [UW-Madison Arboretum](#): A great place to spend the afternoon with friends. Also consider helping them run their summer camp, restore and care for plants, garden, and much more!
 - ❑ [Clean Lakes Alliance](#): If you want to learn more about the Yahara river watershed and how to protect it, consider getting involved with this non-profit. (Bonus points if you know that Madison and UW comprise part of the watershed).



- ❑ [The River Food Pantry](#): Volunteer with one of the River's three programs, the Market, MUNCH, and FAM. These three initiatives provide people with the opportunity to shop for their food, deliver lunches to local youth during weekends and school vacations, and allow families to take pre-made meals they can eat at home.
 - ❑ Wisconsin Opportunities:
 - ❑ [Community Shares of Wisconsin](#): An organization that brings together 70 nonprofits that work with social justice and environmental protection.
 - ❑ [Hunger Task Force](#) (Milwaukee): Farming, stocking boxes with fresh food, food sorting, and working events are just a few of the ways to get involved with this organization.
 - ❑ National Volunteering Options:
 - ❑ [Habitat for Humanity](#): Whether it's working with their restore, building a house, or preserving an existing home, look into Habitat for Humanity's volunteer opportunities throughout the country.
- ❑ Incorporate sustainability ideas you have learned into your everyday life and have conversations with your loved ones about your role in your community!
 - ❑ When initiating a conversation about social and environmental justice with your family, it is crucial to recognize that different members may have different levels of understanding. The gap could vary widely in intergenerational conversations.
 - ❑ To mitigate the generational tension, tailor the conversation to your family's situation while communicating your goals clearly.
 - ❑ Show respect and empathy as you could also gain helpful insights from older generations and new perspectives from younger generations.
 - ❑ For more about tips on having conversation with your family, we recommend this [podcast](#).

Wellness

An important component of maintaining a sustainable and inclusive office environment is ensuring the well-being of your employees/coworkers. Wellness addresses the social category of sustainability and focuses on keeping you and your community healthy.

- ❑ UW Madison offers tools and resources online to promote well-being at work. We highly recommend exploring these resources with your office:

- ❑ [UW Human Resources Well-Being](#): Find resources on cultivating a work-life balance, creating financial well-being, how to connect to your community, and more!
 - ❑ [University Health Services](#): Check out the amazing wellness resources UHS has to offer like a [relaxation podcast on Spotify](#), massage therapy, stress management, and others.
 - ❑ [UW Division of Extension Health & Well-being](#): See their sections on eating well, staying active, and learn about their [FoodWise](#) program.
- ❑ Taking small steps to improve your work setting can also impact wellness.
 - ❑ Maintain a shared office refrigerator to store healthy food options.
 - ❑ Utilize [biophilic design](#), such as adding an indoor plant to brighten up the environment.
 - ❑ Biophilic design means incorporating direct or indirect elements of nature into your workplace such as using natural lighting, adding plants, or utilizing natural ventilation.
 - ❑ Encourage music and art in the workplace (reach out to employees in your office and see if anyone would willing to display their artistic abilities).
 - ❑ Create an inclusive environment in your office where all of your employees feel valued and appreciated.
 - ❑ For strategies on how to create an inclusive environment, read [this article](#) in the Harvard Business Review.

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to utilize this resource! If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the Green Office team at greenoffice@g-groups.wisc.edu or the UW-Madison Office of Sustainability at info@sustainability.wisc.edu. We are more than happy to help you in your sustainability journey or to connect you with other resources that best fit your needs. Making sustainable choices can seem like a daunting task, but remember that small steps can add up to a large impact.