

## The Recycling Reference

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As enlightened 21-century Canadians, we all know that we can recycle our glass, paper, and cans...but what else are we throwing away that could be better dealt with in an environmentally friendly way?

Although we're all familiar with how to recycle most everyday items, there are many household objects that, when they can no longer be of use to us, require special consideration to preserve our environment. Thinking of chucking that computer or ditching those batteries?

Check out our top ten list of ways to dispose of your "garbage" or make new use of your refuse.

### 1. Christmas Past: Taking Down The Tree

Wondering what to do with your Christmas tree now that the New Year has begun? What about other waste such as grass clippings, and home refuse synonymous with the holidays such as used gift-wrap, old correspondence, and cards?

*Disposal Method:* Remove all tinsel, nails, ornaments, and metal stands from your tree and place outside on your collection day as noted in your Garbage and Recycling Calendar in the first half of January. Do not use a tree bag. Compost all other yard waste, or place weeds, plant trimmings, and leaves out in Kraft paper bags, bushel baskets or rigid open-top containers. Got grass clippings? Stop raking and bagging: "Grasscycle" by leaving them on the lawn. Recycle your used gift-wrap and cards, or collect them for reuse at a local school's art department.

*Benefits:* If fake trees put you off but you don't want to cut down a tree each year, consider planting your tree of choice in the backyard. By "grasscycling" or reusing lawn waste, you are decreasing the need to water your lawn, as the grass clippings contain over 90% moisture. And by recycling your holiday cards and wrap, you can reduce the toll that holiday correspondence takes on trees.

### 2. Computers and Inkjet Cartridges: Chucking The Commodore 64

If you've just purchased a new computer, chances are you're wondering what to do with the old one.

*Disposal Method:* Throwing out still-functioning electronic equipment just doesn't compute. If it still works, consider calling up your local community centre or a favourite charity, youth organization, school, or shelter to see if your outdated model could contribute to their cause. If you are getting rid of your computer because it's not fully functional, see if the local computer repair shop would like to scour it to recover parts or repair it. To recycle your used inkjet cartridges at selected Parks and Recreation Community Centres call 1-888-271-3641. Also, Hewlett Packard accepts its own used cartridges by mail; for more info go to [www.hp.ca/products/plus/planetpartner/shipping.html](http://www.hp.ca/products/plus/planetpartner/shipping.html).

*Benefits:* By donating used computers to underprivileged groups or organizations, you can help fill a niche to teach marketable skills and computer programs to individuals who otherwise would not have access. And proceeds of inkjet cartridges recycled through selected Parks and Recreation Community Centres are sent to the Daily Bread Food Bank, while Hewlett Packard

converts material that recycled toner cartridges into raw materials to be used in the manufacture of everyday products.

### **3. Bye-Bye To Batteries**

When your single-use, non-rechargeable batteries are out of juice, they become household hazardous waste. Do you know how to get rid of your used rechargeable batteries as commonly found in cordless power tools, cellular and cordless phones, laptop computers, camcorders, digital cameras, and remote control toys without harming the environment? In tandem with Natural Resources Canada, Transport Canada, Environment Canada, and every provincial and territorial environment ministry, the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation (RBRC) has launched a national Canadian Nickel-Cadmium (Ni-Cd) rechargeable battery recycling program called "Charge Up to Recycle!"

*Disposal Method:* Drop these off at Bell Mobility, Blacks Photography, Canadian Tire, Fido, Futureshop, Home Depot, Home Hardware, Motorola, Telus Mobility, Best Buy, Target, The Source by Circuit City, and Zellers among others, or call 1-800-8-BATTERY or visit [www.rbrc.org](http://www.rbrc.org).

*Benefits:* When a Ni-Cd battery is thrown in the garbage, it eventually ends up in a landfill or municipal incinerator. By recycling these, you can help create a cleaner environment since the reclaimed nickel is used to make stainless steel products while the cadmium is reused to produce new Ni-Cd rechargeable batteries.

### **4. Cell Phones: Observing The Call To Proper Disposal**

If you get a new cell phone, what will you do with your old one? When they end up in landfill sites, cell phones pollute the waste stream with flame retardants, lead, mercury, cadmium, gallium arsenide and other toxic materials best kept away from our food, water, and bodies.

*Disposal Method:* Even if your phone is broken, Collective Good International at [www.collectivegood.com](http://www.collectivegood.com) can scour it for parts, recycle it for its core elements such as the plastics and metals or refurbish it and put into reuse at a low cost to the underprivileged. This organization gathers cell phones for a variety of international charities and promotes environmentally and socially responsible recycling of mobile phones.

*Benefits:* Help make our groundwater and refuse sites a safer place by cutting down on toxic battery dumping that poses health hazards to animals and humans. By turning in your former mobile phone, you can turn it into something useful for people in the developing world, and help raise funds for a charity of your choice in the process.

### **5. Paint and Aerosol Cans: What To Do When They're Empty**

A new item for removal in many areas of the country, paint and aerosol cans can now be recycled along with glass bottles and jars, metal cans, and milk cartons.

*Disposal Method:* Place empty paint and aerosol cans loose, with lids removed, in your Blue Box.

*Benefits:* Instead of having to lug these items to a Household Hazardous Waste depot, you can now recycle these for renewed use in an altered form.

## **6. Paper Egg Cartons, Toilet Paper or Paper Towel Rolls, Tissue Boxes, and Popsicle Sticks**

While all but the last of these products can be recycled, they can also serve another creative purpose. Kids and teachers alike will love you for contributing novel art supplies to their arsenal.

*Disposal Method:* Place loose in your Grey Box, or donate to a local camp's arts and crafts department or recycle-savvy elementary schoolteachers.

*Benefits:* Everyday packaging gives a second life to many objects that enhance childhood creativity, and saves the administrator's budget for other expenses that can't be recycled. Paper egg cartons make great baskets, and toilet paper or paper towel rolls, tissue boxes, and popsicle sticks can instill good values about the three Rs while stimulating the budding architect in any kid.

## **7. Aluminum Packaging: Seek Out That Silver-Coloured Lining**

Often used in the production of beverage containers, pie plates, wrappers, and disposable trays, aluminum is a packaging favourite.

*Disposal Method:* Recycle aluminum by rinsing it to remove food and grease and placing it loose in your Blue Box.

*Benefits:* Because aluminum is made from recycled cans, it pays to recycle not only aluminum, but metal cans as well.

## **8. Composting Organic Waste: Getting Rid of Household Waste The Natural Way**

Composting is nature's way of recycling, decomposing and transforming organic material into a soil-like product called humus. Collect your compost-friendly food scraps in a designated container thereby reducing landfill deposits by keeping organic material out of the waste stream.

*Disposal Method:* Leaves and yard trimmings, paper, and wood are excellent organic materials that can be composted.

*Benefits:* Composting produces a valuable soil amendment, which can improve the texture and fertility of the soil, increasing its ability to retain water, support all forms of life and resist erosion. Compost can be used in agriculture, horticulture, landscaping and home gardening.

## **9. Eyeglasses: Seeing The Way Around The World**

Wondering what to do with your old prescription lenses when you get your new pair?

*Disposal Method:* Donate your used glasses to your local LensCrafters store or Lions Club International chapter. They'll then be repaired, classified, and cleaned for international missions that will provide aid to people in developing countries.

*Benefits:* Your former lenses can make a difference to someone's life and livelihood. Contact LensCrafters's Gift of Sight at 1-800-465-5367 or Lions Club International at [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org) and do your part to help distribute glasses to those without proper vision care.

## **10. Household Hazardous Waste**

Do you have Household Hazardous Waste lying around that you need to dispose of? The list of Household Hazardous Waste, or HHW, is a long one, and contains wastes that are corrosive, flammable, explosive, or poisonous. Products such as anti-freeze and objects such as used tires are HHW, as are batteries (non-rechargeable and car), brake fluid, fertilizers, fluorescent light bulbs, herbicides, household cleaners, insecticides, solvents, and unwanted or outdated medications.

*Disposal Method:* Each community across Canada has its own means of and locations for disposing of HHW; go to [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) or to the Environment Canada web site at [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca) for specific information about facilities closest to you and the materials they accept and services they offer, as well as their hours of operation and location directions.

*Benefits:* By not masking your HHW as regular garbage, you are sparing the environment of corrosive, flammable, or explosive substances and toxins and contributing to improving the earth for future generations.