



Buy Recycled

**RECYCLED
PAPER**

Recycled Paper: The Best Choice

Paper purchasers can protect the environment, save money, and purchase the best papers available just by buying the best — recycled paper.

Reasons To Buy Recycled Paper

Quality

- Excellent performance
- Meets the same technical specifications as virgin papers
- Many are acid-free for archival longevity
- Successfully runs on the most demanding copiers, office machines and printing presses
- Many recycled copy papers are *guaranteed* to work well in copiers

Aesthetic

- High to moderate brightness levels, with pleasing light reflection
- Ranges from clean, bright whites to a wide palette of colors
- Some recycled graphic papers have specks added back in to the paper to achieve custom design effects

Availability

- Available in virtually every grade of paper
- Most printers, paper distributors, and retail outlets have some recycled paper on their shelves
- Choices are even greater if you order recycled paper ahead of time

Financial

- Many are the best buy or evenly priced with nonrecycled, especially letterhead, matching envelopes, business cards, brochures, and many coated papers
- When recycled papers cost more, price differentials are usually quite small
- Buying in larger quantities and planning ahead further reduces or eliminates price premiums on recycled paper

Environment

- Saves trees, energy, water, and landfill space compared to virgin paper
- Protects forests, watersheds, ecosystems
- Produces less pollution than virgin paper production

- Offers environmental savings many times over, since fibers can be recycled repeatedly
- Needs less bleaching than virgin papers; reduces use of toxic chemicals
- Concentrates inks, chemicals and other potential hazards for responsible management, instead of releasing them as do landfilling and incineration
- Incorporates full-cycle production costs, unlike virgin paper which includes no responsibility for its eventual disposal costs

The Future

- Creates strong, on-going markets for local community recycling collection systems
- Provides the foundation of an environmentally sustainable paper production system (even when papers are tree-free, chlorine-free or produced through certified sustainable forestry)

Steps To Take in Purchasing and Using Recycled Paper

- Always specify postconsumer recycled paper, to create markets for local community recycling collection systems.
- Buy the highest postconsumer content you can, balanced against your budget and functional needs.
- Choose the right grade of paper for your job.
- Allow enough lead-time for a wider selection and better pricing.
- Use recycled paper both for “public” paper uses such as stationery, direct mail and brochures, as well as for less visible uses such as copy paper.
- Specify recycled paper use in all contracts.
- Publicize the need to buy recycled paper — to employees, customers, vendors, citizens.
- Label all printed materials, including letters, bills and publications, as printed on recycled paper so that others will see how acceptable and high quality it is.
- Solve equipment and other complaints by investigating all possible causes of the problem. Don’t quit buying recycled paper.
- Deal with cost issues in ways that encourage continued recycled paper purchases. Reduce paper waste to reduce costs. (See RPC brochure *How To Cut Costs While Buying Recycled*.)
- Obtain accurate information. Don’t automatically believe negative claims.

The Bottom Line: Buy Recycled Paper!

Need More Detailed Information? Read On . . .

Recycling Is Essential For A Healthy Environment

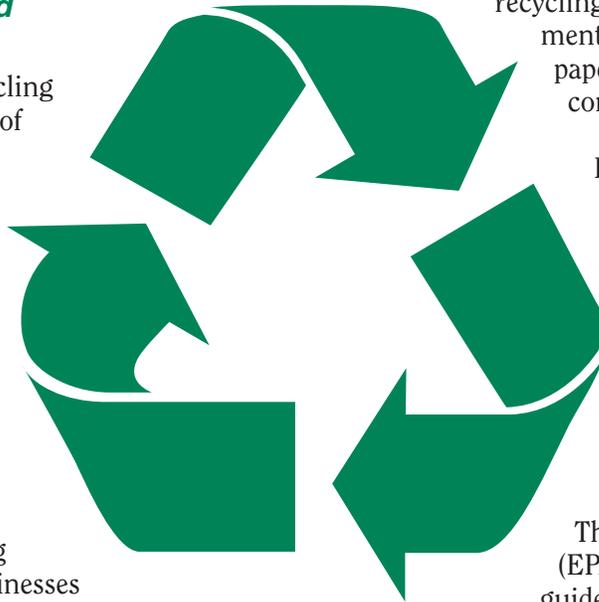
Historically, paper was made by recycling cotton and linen rags. The first paper mill in the U.S. colonies, built near Philadelphia in 1690, was a recycling mill. Paper-makers learned how to make paper from trees in the mid-1800s, allowing a dynamic expansion in communications and business paper usage. At the time, people considered forests and energy to be unlimited, and air and water infinitely capable of cleansing and renewal. Today, we recognize the limits of resource demand and the necessity for environmentally sustainable production systems. That's why recycled paper is a critical part of our vision for a healthy global environment.

What Goes Into Recycled Paper?

Paper that is collected for recycling is sorted according to the type of mill that will use it. Most recovered office paper can be sent to a *deinking* mill, which separates the ink, coatings and other extra materials from the paper fibers. The fibers are then sent to a paper machine to be made into new paper.

Even virgin paper mills have always recycled their internal scraps and many also have long recycled clean scraps from businesses that convert paper into envelopes, reams and other products. A few printing and writing paper mills have long had the capability to deink printers' scraps. Reusing this "preconsumer" material is an economically sensible part of the production process and proves that recycling works.

But the vast majority of paper ends up in people's homes and businesses, where 90% is discarded within a year. This "postconsumer" paper is more diverse, with characteristics such as copier toner and a wide variety of adhesives that are not found in preconsumer scraps and are much harder to recycle. Most of this postconsumer paper used to be landfilled or burned — losing its potential for repeatedly conserving resources by continual recycling — and local governments had few markets for selling the recyclable office and household paper they were collecting in community recycling programs.



Now many governments and business purchasers require postconsumer content in their recycled papers. Most recycled papers now have some postconsumer content. But there is, nevertheless, significant room for increase: more than 90% of the market still goes to virgin paper and even recycled papers could include much higher postconsumer percentages.

How Is Recycled Paper Defined?

Legally, recycled paper only has to include materials recovered after the initial paper manufacturing process. But that definition is so loose that in the past some "recycled papers" contained only mill scraps that would have been included in virgin paper anyway. Recycling collection systems focus on postconsumer paper, which is most of the scrap paper that needs collection and recycling. So, for practical market development considerations, virtually all recycled paper buyers today specify postconsumer content.

Requiring postconsumer content develops markets for community recycling collection systems by creating incentives for paper mills to buy their postconsumer scrap paper. This, in turn, encourages research and development and mill investments in recycling technology, further strengthening market capacity.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issues minimum recycled content guidelines for federal paper purchases. (See <http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/procure/products/printing.htm>.) While only federal agencies and federal contractors are required to follow these standards, they have been adopted by so many state and local governments, as well as businesses and organizations, that most paper companies now meet at least their minimum requirements. The EPA guidelines require minimums of 30% postconsumer content for most uncoated printing and writing papers, and 10% for most coated papers.

How Are Recycled Papers Labeled?

The Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) environmental labeling guidelines require only "recovered materials" for papers labeled as "recycled." There is no postconsumer content required, so papers containing only mill scraps could qualify. Any paper labeled with the chasing arrows symbol (♻️) is required to both have 100% recycled content as well as be recyclable in a reasonably available collection system. If the paper does not meet one or both criteria, text must accompany the chasing arrows symbol

explaining what qualifications the product does meet. If the label does not indicate postconsumer content, you should assume there is none until investigating further.

Who Is Required To Use Recycled Paper?

The *federal government* requires its purchasers to buy recycled paper. It also requires contractors who pay more than \$10,000 in a year for paper to buy recycled for the portion that is used to fulfill government contracts.

Some *state and local governments* require their purchasers to buy only recycled paper. Others allow a price preference (a pricing leeway, usually about 10%) for recycled paper and/or have legislative goals for a percentage of their paper purchases to qualify as recycled content. All 50 states have some type of legislation or executive order encouraging the purchase of recycled paper and/or products. Many state and local governments also require contractors to use recycled paper for government work.

Businesses performing federal contracts are required to use recycled paper, and may be required to do so for other government contracts. Some state *courts* require documents to be printed on recycled paper (e.g. California). Many businesses not required to buy recycled paper nevertheless have developed policies to do so, as part of their environmental and community responsibility.

What Kinds of Recycled Paper Are Available?

You can get just about every kind of paper now with recycled content, providing high quality papers for businesses, billing, magazines, catalogs, books, advertising, direct mail and many other uses. Grades available include:

- letterhead, stationery and envelopes
- business cards
- brochure papers
- high quality copy paper
- offset
- text and cover
- book printing papers
- opaques
- all grades of coated papers
- bristols, index, translucent, tag and board, drawing, and specialty papers

Aren't Recycled Papers More Expensive?

In the past, recycled papers often cost considerably more than virgin papers. Today, many grades such as text and cover (often used for letterhead, brochures and publications) and some coated papers are cost-competitive with virgin papers or even cost less. Copier and offset papers still tend to cost somewhat more, but the price differentials are smaller than ever, usually only a few percent.

When there are cost differences, they are primarily caused by many recycled papers being made on smaller paper machines than virgin papers (creating a difference in economies of scale), by virgin paper mills dropping their prices because of vagaries in the market, and by imbalances caused by a newly capitalized and still-developing recycling system vs. a well-established and industrially integrated tree-pulping production system. Additionally, recycled paper incorporates all its costs into the product, including providing an alternative to disposal, and is not rewarded for its significantly lower energy and water use. Virgin paper costs, on the other hand, are masked by generous government timber, energy and water subsidies and do not incorporate responsibility or costs for the product's eventual disposal.

How Can A Buyer Justify Higher Recycled Paper Costs, When They Exist?

- Recognize that recycled paper's benefits are far greater than simply dollars and allow a price preference. The most common is 10%. Several studies have confirmed that price preferences do not increase paper budgets to the preference limit. Even 10% price preference policies generally yield paper price increases of no more than 2-3% overall. However, some recycled papers need the entire preference while others are less expensive than virgin. Price preferences allow buyers the purchasing room to choose recycled papers even when some grades may be slightly higher-priced than their virgin paper alternatives.
- Aggressively reduce paper waste, using the resulting paper budget savings to buy recycled paper even when it is more expensive.
- Apply recycling income and savings, such as payments for collected paper or avoided disposal costs, to funding the difference in costs for recycled paper. (See RPC brochure *How to Cut Costs While Buying Recycled Paper*).
- Put price differentials into perspective. How much is the actual price difference compared to the total project cost, or total budget, or other expenses? Can you offset higher-priced recycled paper purchases with savings from other types of recycled papers that are less expensive?
- Take the long view. Paper markets are cyclical and highly dynamic. Sometimes all paper prices are high, other times low. Sometimes market factors affect recycled and virgin papers differently and cause temporary price differences. Experienced paper buyers realize that prices continue to vacillate.

What About Quality?

In the 1980s, recycled paper was often of uneven quality, sometimes appearing tan, gray, or spotted. But today recycled paper is available in all colors, including the brightest whites, and meets the highest technical standards, sometimes even exceeding comparable virgin papers.

In 1998, the U.S. Conference of Mayors conducted a study with leading equipment manufacturers and the Government Printing Office. Over two million sheets were tested for paper feeding, reliability, image quality, toner fixability, smoothness, curl, and other aspects. Results proved that recycled papers with 30% postconsumer content performed just as well as virgin papers and recycled papers with lower postconsumer content.

Commercial printers and copier machine manufacturers today agree that recycled paper is suitable for all their machines. They only require good quality paper, whether recycled or virgin.

Common Myths About Recycled Paper

MYTH: *All paper is recycled now, there's no need to ask for it.*

FACT: Even at the height of its success, recycled paper only had about 10% of the printing and writing paper market and even those papers contained mostly virgin materials. Now distributors, printers and paper mills say that demand is dropping because buyers believe they no longer have to ask for recycled. Yet more than 90% of the printing and writing paper made in this country today is *still* virgin paper.

MYTH: *All paper companies are making recycled paper, so all paper must be recycled.*

FACT: Most paper companies own many mills. One or two might be making recycled, but the rest are all making virgin paper. Even many of the recycling mills are making a lot of virgin paper.

MYTH: *Recycled paper jams copiers.*

FACT: Today's recycled copier paper is high quality and technically perfected for use in copiers. If the paper jams in a copier, it is not because of the recycled content. It may be that the ream sat opened for a long time and absorbed moisture. Sometimes people use paper that's not formulated for copiers and then wonder why it jams. Use paper qualified as "high-speed" for high speed copiers. The machine may need cleaning or adjusting. Try another brand of recycled paper, just as you'd try another brand of virgin paper.

MYTH: *The little fibers in recycled paper create too much dust in machines.*

FACT: Excessive dust comes not from recycled fibers but from inadequate production processes or incomplete vacuuming of cut paper sides. Buy high quality paper to avoid such problems.

MYTH: *It's better to focus on tree-free or chlorine-free papers.*

FACT: "Tree-free" is a fiber source. "Chlorine-free" is a bleaching process. Recycling is a system necessary for environmental sustainability. Whether paper is made from trees, crops, agricultural residues, or other fibers, it needs

a system to recycle it after eventual disposal. The fact that recycled paper today consists almost exclusively of tree fibers reflects only the current state of our paper supply. Tree-free and chlorine-free fibers should be combined with recycled content whenever possible, to develop a strong foundation for more environmentally sound papers.

MYTH: *It's better to burn paper for energy than to recycle it.*

FACT: The fibers in fine paper can be recycled up to a dozen times before becoming too short for papermaking, saving resources, water and energy, and reducing pollution each one of those times. The impact and value of these repeated savings are much greater than the minimal amount of energy produced when the paper is burned instead.

MYTH: *Making recycled paper is environmentally damaging.*

FACT: Recycled paper production saves trees, energy and water, produces less pollution, uses more benign chemicals, and requires less bleaching than virgin paper production. It also solves a community disposal problem. The only area in which recycled paper creates more disposal materials is in the greater amount of sludge produced than virgin papermaking. But the problem materials that fall into recycled paper sludge would otherwise have been scattered throughout landfills or concentrated in incinerator emissions or ash. Recycling mill sludge becomes an environmentally preferable way of handling potentially toxic materials such as inks and additives. The sludge of many recycling mills tests non-toxic. Sludge that tests hazardous can be disposed of by an environmentally controlled method.

Strengthen Markets: Join With Others

Paper distributors, printers and retailers need to see demand for recycled paper if they are to continue stocking it. Manufacturers need to hear demand to continue making it. That's why it's crucial to always specify recycled paper with postconsumer content.

Joining coalition groups committed to recycled product procurement can amplify your vote for recycled paper by making the magnitude of the market demand more visible.

- The Recycled Paper Coalition is a group of businesses and organizations committed to recycled paper purchases, paper waste reduction, and office paper collection for recycling.
- The National Recycling Coalition's Buy Recycled Business Alliance encourages purchases of all types of recycled products, including paper.

**Join with others
and Buy Recycled Paper!**

Sponsors

Recycled Paper Coalition

Darby Hoover, Executive Director
c/o Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation
3921 East Bayshore Road
Palo Alto, CA 94303
Phone: 650-985-5568
Fax: 508-546-0208
E-mail: rpc@econet.org
Website: <http://www.papercoalition.org>

Alameda County Waste Management Authority and Recycling Board

777 Davis Street, Suite 100
San Leandro, CA 94577
Recycling Hotline: 1-877-STOPWASTE
Website: <http://www.stopwaste.org>

Buy Recycled Business Alliance

National Recycling Coalition
1727 King Street #105
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: 703-683-9025
Fax: 703-683-9026
E-mail: BRBAInfo@nrc-recycle.org
Website: <http://brba.nrc-recycle.org>

Conservatree

Susan Kinsella, Executive Director
100 Second Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94118
Phone: 415-721-4230
Fax: 415-883-6264
E-mail: paper@conservatree.com
Website: <http://www.conservatree.com>

Author: Susan Kinsella

Sponsors: Recycled Paper Coalition, Alameda County Waste Management Authority

Production: Buy Recycled Business Alliance

March 2000



MEMBER OF



NATIONAL
RECYCLING
COALITION
INC.