

WASTE NOT:



EMPLOYEE SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE JULY 2021

**BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Note: Participation in the Waste Not: Employee Sustainability Challenge may not be counted as work hours.

Disclaimer: All resources provided as part of the Waste Not: Employee Sustainability Challenge are for informational purposes only. Cook County does not endorse any of these entities nor their services nor does Cook County make any warranties regarding the reliability or accuracy of this information.

CHALLENGE OVERVIEW

It's as Easy as 1,2,3...

STEP
01

Take Action

Complete an action, attend an event, or engage with a resource

STEP
02

Self Report

Self report your actions for the week via a Microsoft form

STEP
03

Be Entered to Win

When we receive your self-report, you will be entered to win a prize!

KICKOFF WEBINAR (JULY 7TH)

JULY 7TH | 12PM

Join us for a lunch and learn presentation featuring the Department of Environment and Sustainability and Plant Chicago

SEE PAGE 3 FOR DETAILS

REDUCE (JULY 7-11)

FIRST, **REDUCE!**

Try out simple strategies to reduce the amount of waste you create in the first place

SEE PAGE 4 FOR DETAILS

REUSE (JULY 12-16)

THEN, **REUSE!**

Get inspired to reuse items you already have around the house instead of buying new

SEE PAGE 5 FOR DETAILS

RECYCLE (JULY 17-21)

FINALLY, **RECYCLE**

...or compost, donate, sell, etc.! Dive in to the endless ways to keep waste out of landfill

SEE PAGE 6 FOR DETAILS

FOR DETAILS ON THE CHALLENGES YOU ARE INTERESTED IN AND TO LEARN HOW TO REPORT YOUR PARTICIPATION, SCROLL DOWN!

KICKOFF WEBINAR

JOIN US

July 7th | 12pm

Join us for a Lunch and Learn presentation on diverting waste from landfill. Register [here](#).

Learn more about our presenters below.

COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY



Topic: [Composting](#)

Learn about the importance of composting food scraps and yard waste and some tips for composting successfully at home

Presenter:

Debra Kutska, Environment and Sustainability Initiatives Program Manager

Learn more: [Department of Environment and Sustainability](#)

PLANT CHICAGO



Topic: [Circular Economy](#)

Plant Chicago describes a local circular economy as a collaborative economic practice sustained by local circulation of materials, nutrients, knowledge, and money. It's empowered by transparency, diversity, and inclusion.

Presenter:

Elise O'Malley, Circular Economy & Small Business Manager

Learn more: [Plant Chicago](#)

REGISTER FOR THE WEBINAR [HERE](#)

REDUCE

Visit our [Green Guide Library](#) to learn more!

PACKAGING

- Choose items without packaging.** For example, choose loose fruits & veggies at the grocery store and use a reusable produce bag.
- Choose items in recyclable packaging.** If given a choice, opt for packaging that is recyclable in your area. Often-recyclable packaging includes cardboard, glass, and metal.
- Choose items made from recycled materials.** Look for the percent content that is recycled - the higher the better!
- Shop at a [zero-waste store](#).** Bring your own containers to fill with personal care items and dry goods.



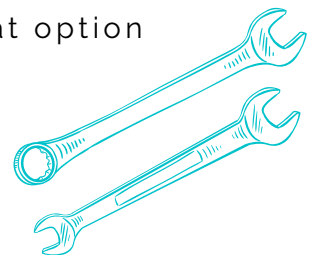
OPT OUT

- Opt out of junk mail & magazine subscriptions.** Check out [ecocycle.org](#) for ideas about how to get started.
- Ask to exclude extras** like plastic utensils, straws, napkins, chopsticks, sauces, and so on when ordering take-out.
- Say no to receipts or choose a virtual receipt.** Most most receipts are [not recyclable](#) because they are "thermal" paper.



COMMUNITY SHARING

- Choose pre-loved, instead of new.** Ideas to get started:
 - join a local "buy nothing" group and be part the gift economy
 - try online thrift stores like [ThredUp](#) & [OfferUp](#)
 - a good old brick & mortar thrift store is also a great option
- Use a "Library of Things"** to borrow items like tools and electronics. Examples in Cook County include:
 - [Arlington Heights](#), [Chicago Ridge](#), [Glenview](#), [Matteson](#), [Northlake](#), [Palatine](#), [West Chicago](#)
 - Specifically for tools: [Chicago Tool Library](#)



FOOD

- Buy only what you need.** Make a grocery list, including quantities, before you go to the store, and stick to it!
- Plan your meals.** Use items you already have, plan meals with similar ingredients, and love your leftovers. Learn more tips [here](#).
- Store food wisely.** Learn to [refrigerate](#) and [freeze](#) fresh foods to extend their life. Also consider these [food preservation methods](#).
- Shop local.** Choose local food vendors, like farmers markets. You can often return packaging like berry or egg cartons each week.

[SELF-REPORT YOUR REDUCE ACTIONS HERE](#)

REUSE

Visit our [Green Guide Library](#) to learn more!

REPLACE SINGLE USE ITEMS

- Coffee cup, water bottle, or thermos.** A reusable alternative to these items is easy to take on the go.
- Grocery and produce bags.** Leave them by the door or in your car so you don't forget!
- Straws and cutlery.** Carry a set with you or keep one in the office.
- Food containers and [wraps](#).** Reduce your use of plastic wrap and Ziploc bags.
- [Wool dryer balls](#).** Replace dryer sheets with this eco-friendly option.
- And [more!](#)**



REPAIR

- Repair broken items** instead of buying new. This is possible for a wide array of items including furniture, electronics, clothing, and toys. Check out [iFixit](#) and our [Green Guide Library](#) for inspiration!

SAVE AND USE AGAIN

- Use the reverse side of used paper** as scratch paper
- Use items you already have for storage** rather than buying new
 - Use glass jars from things like pasta sauce to store new items (cotton balls, beans, rice, etc.)
 - Save and reuse containers from take-out to store leftovers and send home with guests!
- Save packaging to use again later**
 - Save boxes for storage, shipping, or gifts
 - Save tissue paper & newspaper for gift wrapping
 - Save packing peanuts and bubble wrap for shipping or storage
 - Save and reuse gift bags & wrapping paper
- Get crafty!** Use household items for crafts, art projects, and games for kids (newspaper, plastic cups, cans, boxes, Styrofoam, etc.)



QUALITY

- Purchase with quality in mind.** Good quality items last, which reduces cost and waste creation over a lifetime.
 - Fast fashion is particularly problematic. Read writer and fashion consultant Aja Barber's [thoughts on the topic](#).
 - Pre-loved items in thrift stores are often high quality!



FOOD

- Use your food scraps!**
 - make your own chicken or [veggie broth](#)
 - [candy citrus peels](#), or add the zest to dishes for added flavor
 - throw cheese rinds into soups for added flavor
 - [make sauces](#) with herb stems, or wilting leaves (or add to stock)
 - [pickle melon rinds](#)
 - [roast squash and pumpkin seeds](#)
 - roast [potato](#) & [apple](#) peels
 - ...and [so much more!](#)

SELF-REPORT YOUR REUSE ACTIONS [HERE](#)

RECYCLE

Visit our
[Green Guide Library](#)
to learn more!

RECYCLE RIGHT

- Master the basics** of recycling. The items that are recyclable vary based on the facility processing them, but there are [universal guidelines](#):
 - ✓ items should be clean & dry
 - ✓ no plastic bags
 - ✓ replace lids
- Research your hauler.** Find out which hauler picks up your recycling and look up what items they accept or give them a call and ask.
- No "wish-cycling".** We wish everything could be recycled, but if you've looked it up and can't tell if an item can be recycled, it is better to put it in the landfill bin rather than risk contaminating your recycling.

COMPOST

- Consider composting!** Composting is a great way to divert organic waste, which is important because organic material produces methane when it breaks down in landfill.

There are many ways to compost including in your backyard and by joining a pick-up service. The [Illinois Food Scrap Coalition](#) has all the information you need to get started.



HARMFUL WASTE

- Properly dispose of harmful waste.** Some types of waste are harmful to people and the environment. These items cannot be placed in your regular garbage bin and should be taken to a special drop-off location.

Learn how to dispose of harmful waste in Cook County:

- ✓ [electronics](#)
- ✓ [medications & sharps](#)
- ✓ [household hazardous waste](#)

ITEM DROP-OFF OPPORTUNITIES

- Styrofoam.** Take Styrofoam to a Styrofoam collection site. Chicago's [drop-off site](#) is open to all Cook County residents. [Map](#).
- Plastic bags.** Take plastic bags to participating stores like Jewel Osco.
- Light bulbs & batteries.** Call and ask if your local hardware store will take back used bulbs and batteries. [Batteries Plus](#) is a good option.
- Textiles.** Textiles that can't be donated for reuse can be taken to a fabric recycling drop off location. [Chicago Textile Recycling](#) has more information.
- Packaging.** Shipping stores like UPS & FedEx often collect materials like packing peanuts, air pillows, bubble wrap, and shipping boxes - call and ask!
- Contact your municipality** and ask if they offer recycling drop off services
- Try a recycling lookup site** like [Earth911](#) or [SWANCC](#). Enter your zip code and the item you want to recycle and get a list of drop off locations.



DONATE, SELL, SHARE, AND GIVE AWAY

- Donate still usable items** like clothing, shoes, toys, furniture, tools, and art supplies to your local [thrift shop](#) or [reuse store](#).
- Sell items online** using a service like [Thred Up](#), [Offer Up](#), or [Marketplace](#)
- Join your local "buy nothing" group** to exchange goods with neighbors



[SELF-REPORT YOUR RECYCLE ACTIONS HERE](#)