



Paper, what would we do without it?

A life without paper is almost impossible to imagine. We write on it, read from it, wrap presents in it, package food in it, decorate homes with it - the list is almost endless!

In this fact sheet, find out what you can do to recycle your waste (used) paper.

Why recycle paper?

Paper is a valuable raw material that can be re-used to create new paper and board products. Recovered paper emanates from homes and businesses and is a raw material upon which the global Paper Industry relies. This is especially true of the UK Paper Industry, where nearly three quarters of the raw material used to make new paper products is recovered paper. In 2019, nearly 7.35 million tonnes of used paper was recovered for recycling in the UK. Of this, 3.1 million tonnes was used by UK papermakers to make all sorts of products, including newsprint, corrugated boxes, tissue paper and writing paper. The remainder was exported for use in other manufacturing processes across the world.

What sorts of paper can be recycled?

Almost any kind of paper can be recycled, including newspapers, cardboard, packaging, stationery, direct mail, magazines, catalogues, greeting cards and wrapping paper but it is important that these papers are kept separate from other wastes. Paper and board contaminated with food or machine oil or dirty tissues are unacceptable for recycling and should be disposed of with other waste materials.

Recycling at home

All Local Authorities operate household kerbside collection schemes. These require householders to leave their recyclable wastes on the kerbside on specified dates to be collected for recycling. Details of local recycling facilities or kerbside collections will be found on your Council's website, or by contacting the Council directly.

Recycling away from Home

Recycling paper away from home is more challenging, but increasingly local authorities, public bodies and waste

managers are offering a range of recycling facilities. For bulk materials, local Household Waste Recycling Centres provide collection facilities for paper and cardboard and often have a bring bin for newspaper and magazine collections too.

Notices displayed on the banks will tell you what sort of paper is acceptable for recycling. This will most likely be newspapers and magazines but may encourage a mix of all papers.

'On the go' recycling facilities

On-the-go recycling bin schemes can increasingly be found alongside general litter bin collection in public places, including:

- public events (e.g. concerts and festivals)
- hospitals
- leisure attractions/venues (e.g. sporting arenas, theme parks, conference facilities)
- on-street (e.g. city centres, market towns)
- shopping centres
- transport hubs (e.g. airports, railway stations)

The range of materials accepted for recycling may differ from place to place but clear signage should be provided at facilities and paper is almost universally collected.

At work

Although the collection of domestic recyclables has a much higher public profile, much of the recovered paper used by the Paper Industry comes from commercial, industrial and retail sources.

Packaging, graphics and tissue papermaking operations rely heavily on businesses for most of their recovered paper requirements whereas the newsprint sector depends mostly on household paper collections.



How can a business arrange for recovered paper and board to be recycled?

- Check with your Local Authority whether it provides paper recycling collections for businesses.
- If collections are handled by a waste management company, check what recovery processes they operate – if there are none seek independent advice, including an audit of the amount of paper and board likely to be generated in your business.
- Be prepared to segregate your waste stream.
- Take a long-term view. Be realistic; the recycling of paper allows you to reduce the volume of waste you produce and the frequency with which your commercial waste will need to be collected. In the first instance, recycling is a way of avoiding cost. Only if your business produces large volumes of high quality material should you expect to generate a revenue stream from it.

What happens to the recycled paper?

Once you have placed your paper in a bank or collection bin:

- The recovered paper is collected by the Local Authority, a Waste Management Company or by a Recovered Paper Merchant.
- The paper is then sorted, graded and bulked before being delivered to a paper mill.
- Upon reaching the paper mill, it is mixed with water and pulped and the cleaning system removes large contaminants. It is then filtered and screened through a number of cycles to remove smaller impurities until the fibrous material (called Stock) is clean and suitable for papermaking. It is then piped to the paper machine.
- Depending on the type of paper being produced, quantities of virgin pulp from sustainable sources may be added to the stock. Many papers, such as newsprint and corrugated materials, are made from 100% recovered paper.
- Once the finished paper product has been used, it can again be recovered and the whole recycling process starts again.

If you only have a small amount of recovered paper and think that maybe it isn't worth recycling, remember...

...every little counts!

For more information, visit:

Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI)
www.paper.org.uk

Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP):
www.wrap.org.uk

Recycle Now Campaign:
www.recyclenow.com

Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee (LARAC):
www.larac.org.uk

Did you know...?

Paper has the highest recycling rate of any material in the UK.



Revised: September 2020