



# WASTE REDUCTION

A FU<sup>+</sup>UREPLUS GUIDE



## + WHY REDUCE?

The importance of reducing the amount of food and materials we throw away **cannot be overstated**. Our global landfill sites are overflowing. Our rivers and seas have become dumping zones. According to the World Bank, the world generates **2.01 billion tonnes of municipal solid waste per year**, with at least 33% of that not managed in an environmentally safe manner.

In order to protect our ecosystems, conserve natural resources, and cut global greenhouse gas emissions, it's essential that every business looks to understand, manage and reduce its waste streams.

## + WHERE TO START?

Reducing waste can create operational efficiencies as well as being better for the natural environment. Prioritise **prevention** over disposal by reducing the amount of waste that goes in the bin or recycling. **Small actions for office-based companies include:**

- **Eliminating single-use plastics** - Get rid of single-use drinks bottles, straws, cups - anything that can't be reused - and encourage employees to bring a reusable water bottle and coffee cup into work.
- **Going paperless** – Going digital will save on both paper and ink cartridges. Cutting out non-essential office stationery is another quick win.
- **Catering** – Avoid lunch options that come in excessive packaging, and don't overorder on the sandwiches if you're feeding guests. We have more detailed information on reducing food waste in our [Food Waste Guide](#).
- **Choosing supplies** - Small items that are used daily, such as coffee capsules, sugar sachets, or paper towel, can incrementally add to your waste pile. Look at ways of cutting out or swapping items where there are alternatives.
- **Challenging suppliers** – Are you noticing certain supplies consistently delivered in excessive packaging? Put pressure on suppliers to come up with alternatives, or consider switching to a different supplier.
- **Remove bins from under desks** - This is a great behavioral nudge to recycle more and waste less.



## + WASTE SEPARATION & RECYCLING

After reduction, the waste hierarchy puts priority on **re-use and recycling** before disposal. In other words, think before you throw!

- **Label and separate** – Are your office bins easily accessible and clearly labeled? Are you putting your waste in the correct bin and, if recycling, are the materials clean and dry? Make sure you have adequate signage encouraging waste reduction and separation.
- **Think ‘outside the bin’** – If it’s an option in your work space, are you separating your food waste? Do you have space to set up an office compost bin? You could also check whether your waste collection provider will collect food waste from you - many do.
- **Do your research** – There are many different recycling programmes for hard-to-recycle, toxic or electronic items such as batteries, toner cartridges, water filter cartridges, and even pens. Do your research and see what additional items you could be recycling.
- **Where does it go?** – Make sure you use a waste collection provider that deals with waste responsibly and request your data in order to set reduction targets.
- **Eco-friendly alternatives** – There are great biodegradable and eco-friendly alternatives on the market for everyday items such as washing-up brushes and bin-liners. Refilling soap dispensers from returnable bottles is another quick win.
- **Put a policy in place** - Adding a section to your Employee Handbook and/or Code of Conduct is a good way to reinforce your organisation’s commitment to reducing waste. Take a look at our guide [here](#).
- **Training and awareness** - Getting everyone involved is key. Make sure everyone is aware that you are seeking to cut waste, and most importantly, **WHY**. Reduction targets and goals can be a great motivator.
- **Compete!** – If you operate across multiple sites, or on different floors in the same building, could you set up a tracker to see which location can reduce the most waste? Set up a Green Team to lead on the project and get people involved.



## + GIFTS & EVENTS

Think carefully about **sustainable and eco-friendly options** if you make corporate gifts, and look for items that aren't wrapped in (or made of) single-use plastic, or contain polystyrene. Make sure that anything you are giving away **positively represents your brand** and **results in minimal waste**. Could you support a local business when choosing corporate gifts?

Corporate events can be another opportunity to **showcase your commitment to sustainability and waste reduction**. Whether that's choosing venues with positive sustainability commitments, or ensuring catering excludes disposables and that left-over food is disposed of responsibly.

## + SENDING THE RIGHT MESSAGE

If you are a producer or retailer, think about the **messaging** you are sending to your customers about your business through your choice of packaging. Aim for appropriately-sized, recyclable packaging that **minimises waste** and ensures damage-free delivery. Map your supply chain and manufacturing / procurement processes to identify **areas of excessive waste** or packaging.

**Think small.** Be aware that sometimes the smallest items, such as twist-ties or polystyrene packing chips, can cause as much environmental damage as larger items.

If you operate in food production or the hospitality industry, where is your **food waste** ending up? Can it be reduced, reused, or composted?

## + WEIGHING WASTE

If your waste collector can't provide you with waste data, consider manually weighing your bags of waste using a handheld crane scale over a two-week period. Repeat every 3-months to monitor your progress in making reductions.

## + NEED MORE HELP?

We also offer consultancy services if you would like more comprehensive support on waste reduction. Get in touch! [team@future-plus.co.uk](mailto:team@future-plus.co.uk)