

# #SmarterRecycling

A Beginner's Guide to Recycling



Welcome to Recorra's #SmarterRecycling guide. We're here to help you navigate through the often-confusing world of recycling and show you that it is easier than you think.

### Recorra

Founded by Friends of the Earth in 1988 and now a standalone company, we're born environmentalists. With over 30 years' experience, we're the experts in helping businesses across London and the South Coast to reduce waste, increase recycling, and engage with staff; building a better future for our planet.

### How to use this guide

Our #SmarterRecycling guide gives you practical advice, tips, and a handy checklist which are easy to action, right now. It is aimed at anyone who plays a part in recycling at a workspace and many tips can be taken onboard for domestic recycling.

**This is Real Recycling.**

Have a question? Email us at [helpdesk@recorra.co.uk](mailto:helpdesk@recorra.co.uk) or call 020 7407 9100.

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# Setting the scene

As we emerge from a global pandemic, we have a unique opportunity to reset the clock and build back better. Our recovery plan should shape the future in ways that are green, circular, safe, and resilient. #SmarterRecycling plays a significant part in achieving this.

## The Big Picture

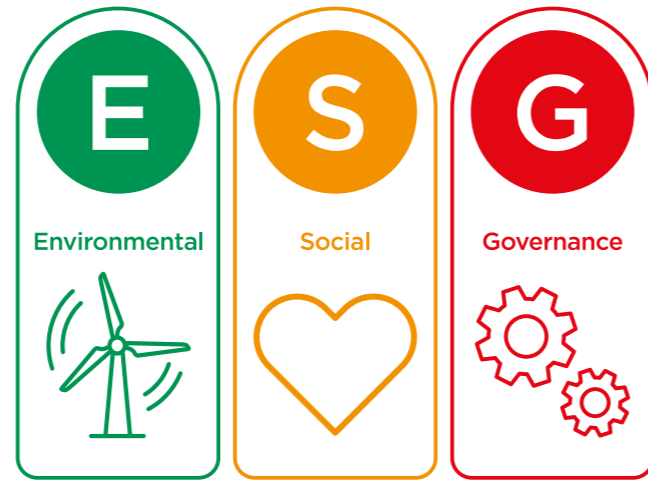
### ESG

ESG crops up everywhere nowadays - a modern buzzword. It stands for Environmental, Social and Governance and together makes up a set of ethical standards used to judge wider value. The inclusion of the environment pillar illustrates its international recognition and importance. As climate change continues to take hold, this pillar will undoubtedly become central to forging a more sustainable future for everyone.

### UN Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, 17 Goals and 169 targets were adopted by the UN Member States. Their aim is to end poverty, protect the planet and improve lives by 2030. 6 out of the 17 goals directly reference the environment, while the remaining all indirectly link to sustainability in the wider sense.

Goal 12, 'Responsible Consumption and Production', captivates the role of recycling. This goal acknowledges that we have not been utilising natural resources responsibly and we must learn how to consume and produce sustainably by reducing waste, managing unavoidable waste effectively and encouraging the circular economy by recycling where possible.



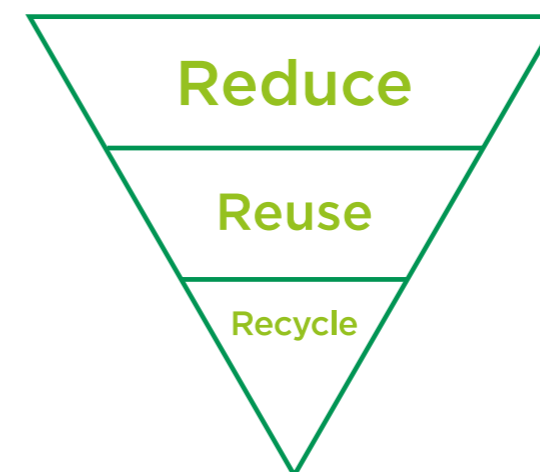
# Why recycling?

Recycling and effective waste management is undoubtedly a key part of protecting the environment, featuring heavily in both ESG and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Three R's - 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' are effective and achievable actions individuals and companies can take to improve their environmental efforts.

### Recycling is important because it:

-  Conserves valuable natural resources
-  Saves energy
-  Cuts climate-changing emissions
-  Reduces landfill
-  Protects ecosystems and wildlife



# Recycling's role in delivering net zero

The evidence is clear, emissions of greenhouse gases are impacting our climate. In May 2019, the UK Government declared a climate emergency, committing the country to net zero emissions by 2050.

To deliver this, we must drive towards a circular economy; re-using and recycling more and burning and landfilling less.

The waste and recycling industry is unique in that recycling enables the circular economy. It removes the need for carbon intensive processes to produce new products. It can therefore have a significant indirect impact on the generation of greenhouse gases. These are known as avoided emissions.

To illustrate the benefit of avoided emissions, a 2016 [Southampton University Study](#) highlighted that 1 tonne of aluminum cans takes 1.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e to reprocess, but saves 8.1 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e by avoiding the production of new aluminum.

Similarly, [Zero Waste Scotland](#) research shows that for every tonne of plastic processed there are potentially significantly different carbon **outcomes**.

One tonne of plastic incinerated at an energy-from-waste facility releases 1.8 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e, whereas recycling plastic avoids nearly 1 tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e, by not creating new virgin materials.

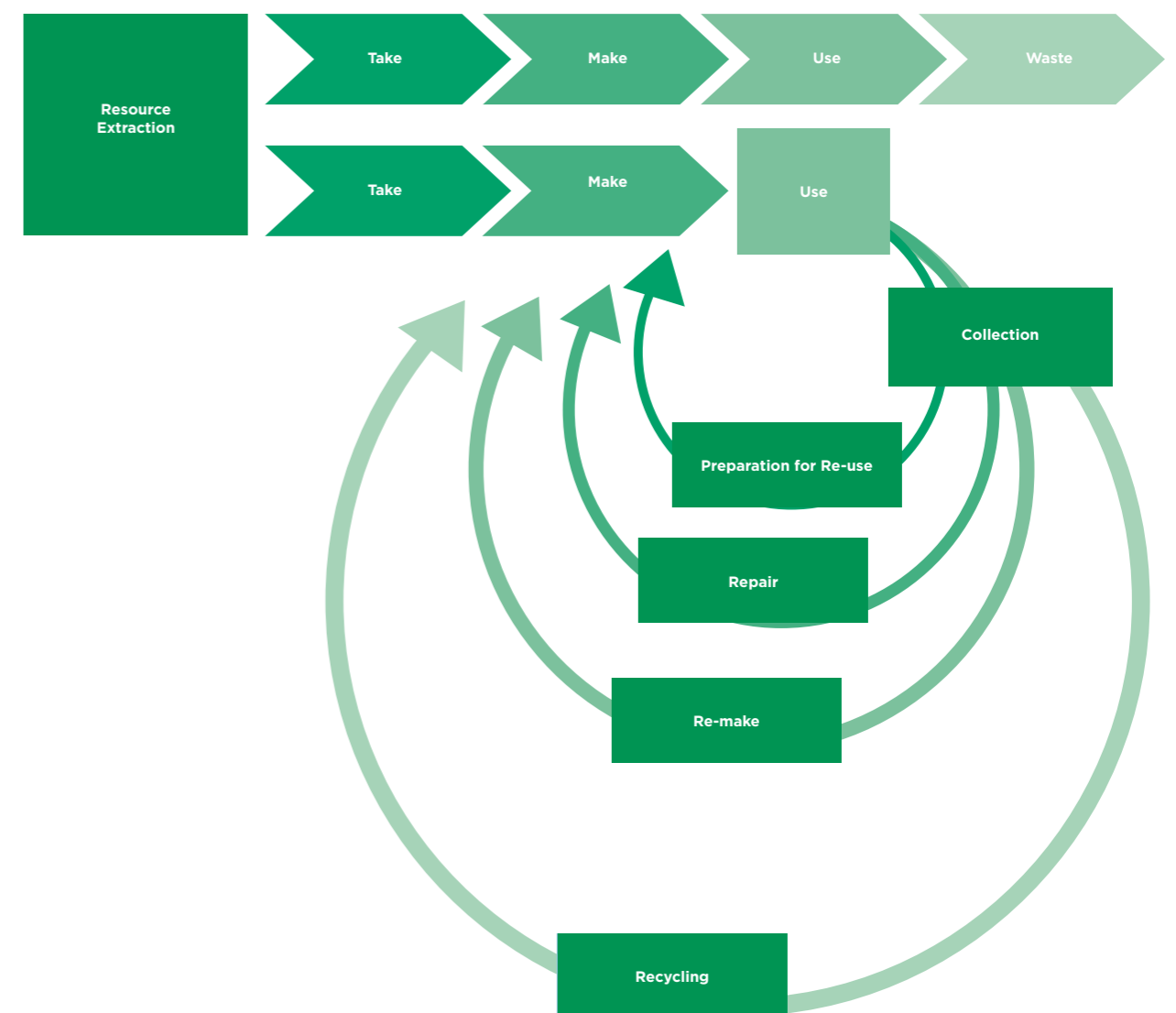
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Small changes can produce significantly different outcomes

# The circular economy

Moving to a circular economy model through implementing real and effective recycling is key in reducing waste emissions and for unlocking avoided carbon benefits.

So let's get started.



# The basics

## Centralised recycling stations

- Using recycling stations can improve recycling rates by [up to 30%](#). They help staff to think before they dispose and provides them with all recycling options
- We recommend removing bins from individual desks as they encourage the unconscious disposal of waste, resulting in decreased separation of materials and therefore lower recycling rates

## Signage

- According to research, we take 1-2 seconds to read a poster - so it's vital the information is clear and consistent
- A signage refresh will help remind your staff of the recycling scheme on site as they return to the office

## Colour coding

- Colour coding your sacks, bins and signage is a simple way to increase staff engagement
- It also increases awareness amongst your cleaning teams and back-of-house staff with a simple to understand system
- Use colour coding across your entire workplace for maximum impact

## Layout and number of bins

- The number and layout of bins will depend on the type of office you have and its size
- We recommend 1 bin for every 15 people to ensure that the correct bin is never too far away
- Having too many general waste bins can discourage recycling. According to [WRAP](#), on average 70% of office waste is recyclable, therefore only 30% of your bins should be intended for general waste
- The most important thing to get right is ensuring bins are easy to use. If bins are inconveniently located, staff won't use them



### Top tip

We recommend using [WRAPs colour-coded system](#) for greater impact and engagement as it's widely used in and out of the office.



### Top tip

Paper bins are best near desks and food caddies should be located in your office kitchens.



# Reducing contamination

## The specifics

Now that you have got the basics sorted, why not integrate these pro-recycling tips.

Contamination is a big problem in the recycling world, as it reduces the value of recyclable materials and the potential for these to be produced into new products. Follow these recommendations to make sure your recycling efforts aren't wasted.

### Keep your recycling 'Clean & Dry'

- To retain the value of your recyclables it's vital they are kept 'clean and dry'
- Liquids and food ruin the recyclability of several streams like paper and card

### Source separate for best results

- Source separation helps to reduce contamination rates in your recycling, therefore more materials can be re-processed and contribute to the circular economy

### Switch to 'Paper, cans & plastic containers'

- The term 'mixed recycling' is vague and confusing. That's why we ditched the term and replaced it with paper, cans & plastic containers, also known as PCPC.
- It 'does what is says on the bin' and can help reduce contamination



## Top tip

Use our 'clean & dry' motto in all of your communications to engage staff and help reduction contamination in recycling.

## Recorra's naughty list

Here is a list of top contaminants we often find in the wrong bin:

- 1 **Tissue and tissue paper** are non-recyclable and are often contaminated with food or liquid. Place them in your general waste
- 2 **Glass, coffee cups, food and shredded paper** are recyclable, but not in a mixed stream. Please separate these for specialist recycling
- 3 **Liquids and food** can affect the recyclability of materials like paper and card - keep these out of all recycling streams!
- 4 **Paper towels** require our dedicated, specialised service for recycling. Tissues and blue tissue still go into the waste bin - however high quality towels can now be recycled!

Refrain from 'wish-cycling'. If you're not certain about what bin to put an item in, we recommend putting it in general waste.





# Staff engagement

## Communication

Ask your supplier to go further than the basics. We offer rigorous Waste Composition Analysis, engaging Lunch and Learns and thought-provoking workshops - covering all the bases. Below, we have detailed some of our top tips to help your co-workers recycle:

- Ensure you communicate the right information to the right team. Different people in your building will require different recycling instructions. For example, office vs cleaning staff
- Distribute an engaging video which will captivate people's attention
- Take your co-workers on a walking tour of the office recycling system to familiarise them with the bins and signage
- Put together a recycling competition or quiz to make engagement fun

## Measuring and reporting

In our experience, it is helpful to look for signs which indicate how your recycling efforts are going.

- If you notice an increase in recycling efforts, acknowledge and congratulate your co-workers
- Watch out for recycling guidelines that people slip up on. If you notice this, politely correct the behaviour

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If you need help analysing your recycling efforts, we offer rigorous waste analysis which can help you establish where you are at and areas for improvement. Please get in touch if you would like to explore this further.



## Top tip

Set up a 'Green Team' to help spread the word and encourage them to act as ambassadors.

# Checklist ✓

Being armed with the correct recycling information is the first step to helping your company with #SmarterRecycling.

Use this checklist to prompt questions, conversations and changes.

## The basics

- Have you removed individual bins from desks?
- Do you have communal recycling stations?
- Is your recycling signage clear and consistent?
- Are your bins conveniently placed?
- Are your sacks, bins and signage colour coordinated?

## The specifics

- Have you replaced your disposable kitchenware for reusable, recyclable or compostable?
- Have you set the default printer and computer setting to double-sided and black and white?
- Do your printers use recycled paper?
- Do you do source separated recycling?
- Do you have a separate bin for food waste?
- Do you use 'paper, cans & plastic containers' signage?
- Is your recycling kept clean and dry?

## Staff engagement

- Does your workplace have a green team?
- Do the different teams have the relevant recycling information?
- Have you communicated the importance and benefits of recycling?
- Have you put together a fun recycling competition or quiz?

## Measuring and reporting

- Do you keep track of your recycling rates?
- Do you keep your eye out for recycling contamination?
- Do you reward recycling adherence and improvements?

# Looking forward

We hope that this guide and checklist has prompted you to think about and improve your company's recycling.

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Even the smallest changes can positively impact your workplace and the wider environment

If you are interested in upgrading your recycling efforts or need our advice, please do contact us on [helpdesk@recorra.co.uk](mailto:helpdesk@recorra.co.uk) or 020 7407 9100.

If you would like to hear more from us, follow us on social media.

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