



Is your Mailbox Constantly Plagued with Junk Mail???

REDUCE before you RECYCLE.

Every year, Americans receive close to **4 million tons** of junk mail. Some people have taken steps toward sustainability by recycling this junk mail instead of tossing it in the trash. While recycling is an appealing method, there is a more constructive action we can take: **REDUCE**.

Why recycling is not all it's cracked up to be:

According to the EPA, "The most effective way to reduce waste is to not create it in the first place." The EPA explains that by preventing the production of waste, we can better protect our natural resources, help keep toxic materials out of the environment, and reduce the cost of waste disposal.

According to Livestrong.com, the process of recycling paper is not as simple and clean as it seems. Our current method of recycling paper is largely powered by fossil fuels. Also, because many paper inks contain heavy metals, harsh chemicals ranging from detergents to caustic/corrosive chemicals (like chlorine) are used to extract ink from the paper before it is recycled.

Once the recycling process is complete, there are two byproducts: wastewater and sludge. The wastewater from this process, which contains the heavy metals from the extracted ink as well as dioxins, makes its way into our waterways. The sludge also contains heavy metals from the inks, and this waste is either dumped in a landfill or incinerated, producing inevitable pollution and landfill waste either way. Although recycling can be a helpful tool in supporting the health of the environment and our communities, it is not an excuse to be unintelligent consumers.

How to be intelligent consumers and reduce your waste:

How many of you receive advertisements for reusable pens, bioengineering conferences, magazine subscriptions, and recycled toilet paper??? (Okay, maybe we're the only department to receive catalogs for toilet paper!) Regardless of you receive, you probably agree that most junk mail is unnecessary and annoying. And now, you also know that recycling your junk mail

puts an unnecessary burden on the environment. This burden to you and the environment can be avoided by **REDUCING before RECYCLING**.

Here's how:

1. Locate the contact information (phone number or return address) on any unwanted junk mail you receive, and ask these companies to take you off of their mailing list.
2. Ask the U.S. mail preference service to put you on the "do-not-mail list," which is a list maintained by major marketing associations. There is a charge of \$1 for this service. Here's the link: <https://dmachoice.thedma.org/>

By contacting the companies sending you junk mail and asking them to STOP, you will save them money and greatly reduce the stress that recycling can put on the environment. Let's STOP the problem at its SOURCE!

Additional Resources:

<http://www.epa.gov/wastes/conservation/rrr/reduce.htm>

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/159591-the-negative-effects-of-recycling-paper/>

<http://web.epa.ohio.gov/opp/consumer/junkmail.html>

<http://www.wikihow.com/Get-Rid-of-Junk-Mail>