

GREENING YOUR EVENTS

Participants will learn:

- Why and how to plan an event that has less impact on the environment.
- Quick facts about waste from events.
- What to use to make your event green.
- How to give no-waste gifts and use alternative gift wrap.

Why are Green Events Important?

Gatherings can generate a significant amount of waste in a short period of time. Events of all sizes have many options to reduce their impact on the environment. Learn what you can do to reduce waste and start recycling at your events!



How to Green Your Events:

Whether it's a large community festival or your Thursday night book club, Green Gatherings (RethinkRecycling.com/event) has a wide range of resources to help you learn why going green matters and what can work for your event.

Green Event Facts

A 2006 study of 25 different venues and events in California indicated that on average 2.44 pounds of waste is generated per visitor per day.

CalRecycles.ca.gov

From Thanksgiving to New Year's, the average household generates 25% more trash than any other time of the year.

Environmental Protection Agency, epa.gov

Collecting name badge holders for reuse at an event of 100 attendees can save about \$75 per event.

RethinkRecycling.com

A typical dinner travels more than 1,500 miles before it's served. Eating local food greatly reduces the consumption of fossil fuels and wasteful packing materials.

*National Resource Defense Council
NRDC.org*

Using reusable china rather than plastic disposables for meals served at a one-day event with 100 attendees can save approximately 17 pounds of plastic waste.

RethinkRecycling.com

Steps You Can Take to Make Your Event More Environmentally Friendly

1. Planning Your Event

- Send electronic invitations – many free options are available.
- Ask guests to RSVP so you can plan for the right amount of food.
- Purchase items that can be recycled or composted.
- If planning a business meeting, request that presenters provide electronic copies of their presentation rather than printed copies.
- Check with the event location to find out if sufficient recycling bins are available, or make sure you provide them if you are the host.

2. Shopping for Supplies

- Plan your shopping in advance so you make fewer trips to the store.
- Rent or borrow party games, tables, and decorations instead of buying new.
- Choose locally grown food that is in season. Purchase produce from a farmer's market and ask your bakery if they use local ingredients.
- If local food is not available, choose organic food sourced in the USA.
- Buy non-perishable food in bulk.

3. Hosting Your Event

- Turn the heat down before guests/attendees arrive.
- Encourage guests to carpool, bike, or use mass transit.
- Provide recycled paper nametags or reusable name badges.
- Send out electronic copies of presentations instead of printing handouts.
- Use reusable dishes, glasses, utensils, and linens. You can rent, borrow, or buy them secondhand.
- Place clearly marked recycling bins next to trash cans.
- Send leftover food home with guests/attendees (bring extra food storage containers from home) and compost your fruit and vegetable scraps.
- Use bulk pour dispensers and containers for condiments. For example, provide a sugar bowl and large bottle of ketchup instead of individual packets.



4. Gift Giving

- Purchase or make your own greeting cards from recycled paper or used greeting cards. Avoid musical greeting cards, which require special disposal.
- Send electronic greeting cards – many free options are available online.
- Give the gift of an experience, such as tickets to a sporting event or concert, or membership to the zoo, a museum, or arboretum.
- Create personal "gift of time" coupons for a service or talent you can offer, such as free babysitting, housecleaning for a day, or cooking lessons.
- Look for gifts that are long lasting, non-toxic, or energy saving.



5. Gift Wrapping

- Use recyclable wrapping material like the comics section of the newspaper, or old maps.
- Reuse decorative boxes and gift bags.
- Reuse packing peanuts or bubble wrap for packing material, or use pages of a newspaper or magazine.
- Reuse bows, ribbon, and gift tags from previous gifts.
- Make the present part of the wrapping, like wrapping a kitchen gadget inside a dishtowel and tying it together with ribbon.

Green Events Activities

Green Events Activity #1

Host a Green Birthday Party

Discuss ways to make your next birthday party a low-waste event and consider doing activities from other sections of this toolkit at your party.

Starter questions:

- Where will you have the birthday party?
- How many guests will you invite?
- How will your guests be invited?
- What food will you serve?
- What will you do with the leftover food and beverage containers?
- What activities will you do?

Green Events Activity #2

Make Your Own Gift Wrap or Bags

Instead of spending money on new wrapping or gift bags, make your own. Friends and family members will enjoy receiving something handmade.

- Decorate plain newsprint, brown Kraft paper, boxes, grocery bags or old cardstock using stencils, collage, crayons, or markers (these papers can be recycled later).
- Use old gift wrap, newspapers, fabric, or wallpaper scraps to make a gift bag.



Search "make your own gift bag" on the Internet for pattern ideas.

- Enlist the help of people who can sew and create reusable cloth gift bags. Encourage people to give gifts in the bags and reuse them each year. The bags could also be sold as a fundraiser. Find instructions at www.wikihow.com/Sew-a-Cloth-Gift-Bag.

More Green Events Activity Ideas

RethinkRecycling.com/event

Where to Get More Information

Print and Online Resources:

- **From Ramsey County**

- Greening Up Your Parties* (If you need a temporary recycling bin, contact your county.)

*Attached at the end of this Toolkit.

- **RethinkRecycling.com/event**

RethinkRecycling.com has information to help you plan a green event of any size. Resources including planning guides, tips, case studies, helpful links, and more are provided to help you get started with going green at your next event. Try one or try them all - pretty soon you'll find the "shade of green" that's right for you!

- Dakota County [event resources](#)
- Hennepin County [Event recycling and waste reduction planning guide](#)
- Eureka Recycling [Zero-Waste Event Planning](#)
- Washington County [Recycling Container Loan Program](#)



Green Gatherings Success Story

At our Community POWER program meetings, which usually consist of about 100 people, we work with local caterers to offer affordable, local, organic and healthy food options for breakfast. We also use a caterer that can offer cloth napkins, reusable dishware, and bulk yogurt, juice, etc. We collect food scraps for backyard compost. We also ask for RSVPs to ensure portion control.

We make sure to use an event space that already offers recycling to ease the set up. We make sure to announce where the recycling containers are located at the beginning of the meeting and that they are properly placed for our specific event. We also promote what is recyclable at the building to all presenters so that they can mention and help encourage recycling.

We RSVP and promote the event electronically. We offer one double-sided handout with necessary contact information, and also make it available online after the event to be accessed electronically in the future. We reuse all of our signs by keeping them generic and not using dates and storing them in a plastic protective insert so they do not get damaged. We also have participants bring their own existing name tags and coffee mugs to reduce waste.

Community POWER Grant Program
Solid Waste Management Coordinating Board

Greening Up Your Parties



Parties and family gatherings are a joyous time, but often these festivities create lots of extra waste. From Thanksgiving to New Year's alone, the average household generates 25% more trash than any other time of the year.

Follow these tips to change the way you celebrate special occasions for a cleaner environment.

PLANNING YOUR PARTY

- Send electronic invitations – many free options are available online.
- Ask guests to RSVP so you can plan for the right amount of food.

SHOPPING FOR SUPPLIES

- Plan your shopping in advance so you make fewer trips to the store.
- Rent or borrow party games, tables and decorations instead of buying new.
- Choose locally grown food. Purchase produce from a farmer's market or ask your bakery if it uses local ingredients. Many farmers provide local food year-round.
- If local food is not available, choose organic food sourced in the USA.
- Buy non-perishable food in bulk or large volumes.



RethinkRecycling.com/events

Visit our website for more ideas on greening up your meetings.



HOSTING YOUR PARTY

- Turn down the heat before guests arrive.
- Encourage guests to carpool or use mass transit.
- Use reusable dishes, glasses, utensils and linens. You can rent, borrow or buy them secondhand.
- Place clearly marked recycling bins next to trash cans. (Contact Ramsey County at 651.266.1199 to borrow free recycling bins for your next event)
- Send leftover food home with guests and compost your food scraps.

GIFT GIVING

- Purchase or make your own greeting cards from recycled paper. Avoid greeting cards, which require special disposal.
- Send electronic greeting cards – many free options are available online.
- Give the gift of an experience, such as tickets to a sporting event or membership to the zoo.
- Create personal “gift of time” coupons for a service or talent you can offer, such as free babysitting, housecleaning for a day, or cooking lessons.
- Look for gifts that are long-lasting, non-toxic or energy-saving.

GIFT WRAPPING

- Use recyclable wrapping material like the comics section of the newspaper.
- Reuse decorative boxes and gift bags.
- Reuse packing peanuts or bubble wrap for packing material, or crumple some pages of a newspaper ad insert or magazine.
- Reuse bows, ribbons and gift tags from previous gifts.
- Make the present a part of the wrapping, like wrapping a kitchen tool inside a dish towel and tying it together with ribbon.