

# Cooped up at Home? Reduce, Reuse, Recycle ♻️

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## Cooped up at Home? Tips to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle & Compost



Inspired by our friends at the [City of Cambridge](#), the Recycle Smart Team wanted to share some tips for how to reduce waste while you are practicing social distancing. You may be getting less use out of

your reusable coffee tumbler lately, but that doesn't mean you can't make a difference while sheltering in place.

- **Try your hand at composting.** Many compost pick-up services have temporarily stopped or changed protocols as a health precaution during the coronavirus outbreak. With spring weather on the way and extra time on your hands, it's a great opportunity to try composting in your back yard or set up an indoor worm bin (called "vermicomposting") to compost your food scraps. Learn more about backyard composting and vermicomposting here: <https://www.mass.gov/lists/home-composting-green-landscaping>
- **Opt out.** If you are ordering take-out or delivery, ask the restaurant to skip the disposable cutlery. You likely have reusable forks, spoons, and knives on hand. Thanks to the [Habits of Waste #CutOutCutlery](#) campaign, delivery services like Uber Eats are getting on board and providing plastic cutlery for take-out orders by request only.
- **Spring clean your mailbox.** Recycling bin overflowing with catalogues and junk mail? Check out these resources for [how to cut down on unwanted junk mail](#) from the comfort of your couch.
- **Choose tap water.** [According to the EPA](#), it's safe to skip out on the bottled water frenzy and continue to drink tap water. Save a trip to the store, save money, and save the environment. Win-win-win. DYK? tap water actually undergoes more testing than bottled water and the results have to be disclosed to the public? To improve the safety and taste of tap water - we recommend using a filter. The Environmental Working Group (EWG) has a great [Tap Water Database](#) and [Step-by-Step Guide](#) to picking out a water filter based on your local drinking water quality report.
- **Running out of cleaning supplies?** There are many [DIY recipes](#) for how to make your own basic sustainable, non-toxic cleaning staples such as glass cleaners and stain removers using ingredients you likely already have at home. Skip the trip to the store and avoid the packaging and cost of store-bought cleaning supplies all together. Note these are not meant for disinfecting but they're great for tackling basic dirt and grime.
- **Dress up your table.** Paper napkins may be challenging to find these days. Take this opportunity to try out those cloth napkins you've had your eye on. It's a great way to bring the dine-in restaurant experience home, save money, and reduce your waste. Just throw them in the wash at the end of the week and voila!
- **Make it a game.** Running out of ways to entertain the kiddos? Get the whole family involved while you use the [Recyclopedia search widget](#) to brush up on your recycling knowledge. Bonus points for whoever gets the most right answers to "can I recycle it?"
- **Tinker.** Broken toaster? Missing button? Flat bike wheel? It's a great time to learn some new repair skills. [YouTube](#) and "[instructables](#)" are great sources for learning how to fix something. Need more "hands-on" help? Fix-it-Clinics have gone virtual! Connect with a volunteer repair guru at: <https://bit.ly/2Uwmb3f>
- **Embrace your inner "Food Waste Warrior."** Avoid the long lines and empty shelves at the grocery store with masterful meal planning, proper storage techniques that keep your produce crisper for longer, and recipes for those bananas that have seen better days. If you want to learn from the masters - [SaveTheFood.com](#) has helpful tips, tricks, and tools to stretch out what you have on hand.
- **Host a Bake-Off.** Many of our snack foods come with a lot of baggage. The granola bars, chips, popcorn, trail mix, cookies, and crackers from the store sure are convenient but also create a lot of waste. Challenge yourself and a few friends to try to make one of your go-to snack items at home this week and then host a virtual "tasting" party to compare notes and exchange recipes.
- **Borrow Digital Books, Movies, Music and Magazines.** Borrowing instead of buying is a tried and true way to reduce your waste. While physical libraries may be shut down temporarily, many local libraries are offering virtual library cards and resources.

## What do I do with...



Are you using more disinfecting wipes than usual or making your way through hand sanitizer at an unprecedented speed? We've updated the [Recyclopedia](#) to answer your pressing questions on how to properly dispose of these items you may be using to protect yourself and your family during this difficult time. Here's a quick guide:

- ✗ [Face mask](#) - Put this item in your trash bin.
- ✓ [Hand sanitizer bottles](#) - Put empty and rinsed bottle in the recycling. If there is a cap, replace the cap before putting in the recycling. If there is a pump, put pump in the trash.
- ✗ [Sanitary wipes](#) - Put this item in your trash bin. Remember: Never flush wipes. Even if they are labeled "flushable." Wipes clog up sewer and septic systems.
- ✓ [Disinfectant Wipes Plastic Canister](#) - Put this item in your recycling bin. Flexible or box-shaped plastic wipe containers should go in the trash.
- ✗ [Rubber gloves](#) - Put this item in your trash bin.
- ✗ [Plastic gloves](#) - Put this item in your trash bin.

**Did You Know?** Not all paper products can be recycled. [Tissues](#), [Paper Towels](#), and [Paper Napkins](#) should not go in the recycling bin. The fibers in these paper items are too short to be used again. Plus - we want to do everything to keep the folks sorting our recyclables healthy & safe! Please put these items in the trash.

Have other recycling questions? Check out the Recyclopedia at [RecycleSmartMA.org](https://RecycleSmartMA.org)

Be well and stay in touch,  
**The Recycle Smart Team at MassDEP**



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