

## Spring cleaning

Spring cleaning offers a great opportunity to reduce waste, save money and make a positive impact on the environment. As the weather warms up, put reuse and recycling into action with some of the ideas below.

### Cleaning out the house, apartment, basement or garage

- Create a designated "to recycle" pile where you can collect all recyclables, including retired electronics, old magazines, junk mail, cardboard boxes and other items.
- Donate items in usable condition, such as clothing, appliances, books and home construction and renovation materials.
- If you need extra cash, set aside gently used items and have a yard sale.
- Organize a swap with friends, family or coworkers to trade books, clothing, games and other household items.
- Contact your local recycling program to see what large or bulky items you may be able to bring to a drop-off for recycling, such as Styrofoam packaging, appliances, large cardboard boxes and yard debris.
- Use washable cleaning rags instead of paper towels.
- Add to your cleaning rag supply with clothing and linens that are torn or stained.
- Start a compost pile of yard materials that accumulate from spring yard cleanup.
- Leave grass clippings on your lawn as you mow.
- Check if your community or county is hosting a [Clean Sweep collection](#) [exit DNR] where you can bring unwanted household chemicals or leftover prescription drugs.

### As the school year ends

- Go through school supplies from this year and sort out what can be used for craft projects or in the next school year, such as tape, glue, pens and pencils, crayons and colored pencils.
- Save notebooks, folders and binders that are in good shape for use around the house or in the next school year.
- Reuse pencil cases to organize junk drawers, kids' jewelry or accessories, or small items when packing for a trip.
- Collect one-sided papers from classes and assignments to create a ready supply of scrap paper for the household. Cut them into halves or quarters for a variety of sizes.
- Save a few of your kids' paintings and drawings from the school year. You can turn pictures into greeting cards to send to relatives or laminate paintings and use them as placemats.
- For a fun craft, recycle random or broken crayons by melting them into new shapes and colors.
- Organize a swap with other families to trade books, clothing for growing children, age-appropriate games and school supplies.
- Give backpacks and lunchboxes a good cleaning before putting them away for the next school year. On backpacks, use warm water and a mild dish detergent and let the bag air dry. Sprinkle the insides of lunchboxes with baking soda or fill them with crumpled newspaper to keep them odor-free until they're ready to use.

- If backpacks are too worn out to be used the next school year, find other uses for them, such as carrying garden supplies or beach toys.
- Do the same for used up lunchboxes. Insulated lunchboxes can be kept in the car to keep cold or frozen groceries cool on your trip home from the store.

#### **College move-out**

- Check your school's website to see if they have any waste reduction events, programs or tips during move-out. Look specifically for opportunities to recycle carpets, electronics and other large or bulky items.
- While packing, make piles for recycling, donation, electronics recycling and waste to make disposing of each group of items easier.
- Donate unwanted furniture, appliances, household goods and clothing to local resale stores.
- Donate non-perishable food items to a local food bank.
- Return old textbooks to your university bookstore or sell them to an independent reseller to avoid sending them to a landfill.