

PUT A LID ON IT! *Tips and Tools to Reduce Waste*

Green Steps

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Recycling is great. But reducing your waste in the first place is an even better way to put the lid on your trash and conserve resources. Get started with the following ideas. Chances are, you'll think of many more ways to reduce and reuse.

Say no to junk mail

An average of 675 pieces of junk mail end up in every mailbox each year, totaling a whopping four million tons nationwide. You'll save trees and time by following these easy steps to reducing junk mail.

More Tips to put a lid on trash

Not sure where to start? Follow these quick and easy tips to prevent waste:

1. **Avoid disposable items** whenever possible.
2. **Choose durable quality items** that can be used again and again and will last a long time. You will probably spend a lot less over

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Metro Recycling Information
503-234-3000
mri@oregonmetro.gov

replacing inferior, cheaply made goods that do not last very long.

3. **Use the blank sides of scrap paper** for notes and lists before recycling the paper.

4. **Save plastic produce bags** and paper or plastic grocery bags for reuse.

5. Even better, **get a permanent shopping bag**. Get two!

6. **Buy in bulk**: fewer shopping trips, less packaging, more product, lasts longer. Refill your own bags or containers instead of getting new ones each time you buy.

7. Why buy bottled water? **Get a reusable bottle** and fill it with our very clean, tasty tap water. Oregonians purchased about 200 million bottles of water in 2005, 125 million were thrown in the garbage. (More from the Center for a New American Dream.)

8. **Pack lunches in reusable containers** to reduce waste and save money.

9. **Look for less packaging**, better yet look for none. Make sure packaging can be reused

or recycled easily. In 2005, 20.5 percent of our garbage was packaging--a whopping 263,000 tons.

10. **Buy handmade and locally made or grown**. There is usually a lot less packaging than products packaged and shipped from far away.

11. **Get a travel mug for your coffee** and other beverages. Coffee shops usually give a 5 or 10-cent discount for bringing your own cup.

12. **Borrow books from the library** or buy them used rather than purchasing them new.

13. **Repair, refurbish, recover** instead of throwing away home furnishings, appliances and electronics. Support local repair business instead of disposing and buying foreign made goods.

14. **Donate items you can no longer use** to a nonprofit group or thrift store.

15. **Purchase quality used items** such as furniture, clothing, sports equipment, toys and books at second-hand stores, garage sales and through classified ads.

16. **Compost** leaves and grass clippings in a home compost pile and kitchen scraps in a worm bin. Use the compost to improve your garden or feed house plants.

Top Five Training Tips for Resident Screening

By Mike Lapsley, President and CEO of RentGrow, Inc

1. **Choose a screening provider that offers regular training.** From properly training new staff members to providing refresher "courses" for veteran employees, it's important that your screening provider offers regular and accessible training. Keep in mind that training isn't "one size fits all." In the Multifamily industry, there are many facets of the screening process, and some are going to be more relevant to your particular situation than others. Make sure your screening partner is aware of your specific needs.

2. **Make sure your office keeps up with relevant laws.** In the Multifamily industry, there are important and relevant laws that every member of your leasing staff should know. Take an extra step to round out your training process by educating your office on important laws, such as the Fair Housing Act (FHA), Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act, (The FACT Act). All property managers and leasing staff should have working knowledge of each law. While your screening provider can help you in this area, you should still take that extra step and provide additional training classes focused on these laws. Make sure to stay on the lookout for new laws and provisions, such as the new sections of the [FACT Act](#).

3. **Teach best practices when it comes to security.** Since resident screening involves the evaluation of personal information, such as credit reports, it's important that employees understand how to protect tenants' privacy and sensitive information. Your staff should also be well versed on safe computing and security practices. For example, every employee should have his or her own password (which should be supplied by the screening company). Then, make sure employees not only keep those passwords private, but also change their passwords every 90 days (a Credit Bureau requirement). Finally, train your team to follow appropriate policies when disposing of consumer files—both virtual and hard copies. Posting these policies in an area where staff members congregate is one way to ensure awareness of proper disposal policies.

4. **Remember the little things and focus on details.** Providing reminders about the "little things" — those simple, everyday procedures that may seem like no-brainers — can help your staff keep important practices top of mind. For example, it's important for users to be careful when entering data, reviewing data, and handling and storing applicants' confidential information. Simply entering data incorrectly can skew an applicant's results, so encourage your staff to take the time to double-check their work to avoid easy mistakes and setbacks.

5. **Refresh your training yearly.** Take time to have an office-wide refresher training class once a year, this will improve compliance. If any questions arise about your screening service, call your screening provider for help. Now's the perfect time to set up your annual "refresher" training.