

## Julia advises on what you can do

**Recycling is a start but keep the emphasis on reusing and reducing. Tick off the following tips and your actions will slash the amount you recycle and throw away by two-thirds**

**COMPUTER RECYCLING** [envocare.co.uk/computers](http://envocare.co.uk/computers) and [wasteonline.org.uk](http://wasteonline.org.uk) lists UK charities that will be happy to take your old computer equipment.

**JUNK MAIL** When you recycle envelopes remember to separate the plastic bit from the paper. Plastic messes up the recycling process. If it's a big package I scribble 'return' on it and send it back to source. Cut down on junk mail by putting a 'no junk mail' sign on your door and registering at [mpsonline.org.uk](http://mpsonline.org.uk) to reduce unwanted advertising.

**PLASTIC BAGS** Many supermarkets sell durable 'bags for life' so buy one and reuse it. Keep some in your bag all the time.

- Buy a string bag to reduce your plastic bag mountain from [naturalcollection.com](http://naturalcollection.com). They take up no space in your handbag and are immensely strong and expandable.
- Use the plastic bags that package magazines and newspapers as sandwich bags. Keep a couple in your bag and fill with fruit and vegetables when you're shopping, or use to cover food.

**USED PRINTER CARTRIDGES** Send to the animal rescue centre ([farplace.co.uk](http://farplace.co.uk)) or the British Heart Foundation ([bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk)).

**BATTERIES** These should be disposed of safely as they may contain chemicals, which can cause pollution. Buy mercury- and cadmium-free batteries as these are less toxic.

Recycling batteries is difficult as there are no reprocessing facilities for them in the UK. In some areas household batteries are collected and sent to the nearest facility in France for recycling, but this uses up a considerable amount of energy. Instead,

- use mains electricity where possible.
- use rechargeable batteries and a charger.
- send batteries back to manufacturers, where such a scheme is available.



**BOTTLES** Don't buy bottled water. The UK's tap water quality is among the best in the world. Alternatively, you can install a water purification system under your sink.

**CD RECYCLING** Send the CDs and DVDs that are given away with newspapers and magazines to [polymer-reprocessors.co.uk](http://polymer-reprocessors.co.uk) and [plasticwaste.co.uk](http://plasticwaste.co.uk). Or give them to a charity shop.

**CLOTHES** The UK dumps up to 900,000 tons of textiles every year, which if landfilled, produce methane gas. There are many places to recycle old clothes, including jumble sales, charity shops and eBay.

**ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT** Waste-collection authorities are now obliged to collect unwanted bulky items like fridges, although they can charge a collection fee. They'll then be taken to a fridge-recycling plant where the ozone-depleting substances are extracted and the metal is melted down. EU law holds the manufacturers and retailers responsible for the collection and recycling of waste electronic and electrical equipment. So when your washing machine, TV or stereo finally dies, Curry's will have to come and pick it up. If equipment is still working donate it to the Furniture Reuse Network ([frn.org.uk](http://frn.org.uk); 0117 954 3571). Or if broken, take it to your local dump where it can be added to other scrap for recycling. Don't make a special journey in the car or you'll cancel out the energy you save.

**KITCHEN WASTE** Buy a worm bin (several types are available from [wigglywiggles.com](http://wigglywiggles.com)) and transform your leftovers into fantastic compost. Bins are best kept outside, but if you have no outside space a Bokashi EmPowered Bin, also available from [wigglywiggles.com](http://wigglywiggles.com), will do the same job kept in your kitchen. Both are completely odourless.

**OFFICE FURNITURE** Green-Works is a not-for-profit social enterprise providing office furniture to schools, charities, community groups and start-up businesses. Contact [green-works.co.uk](http://green-works.co.uk)

**PAPER AND CARDBOARD** Paper is biodegradable, so if it is put into landfill, it will decompose, producing methane, which is a potent greenhouse gas (20 times more potent than carbon dioxide). Fortunately, it's one of the easiest things to recycle. Ask your council if it has a kerbside pick-up scheme, or enquire at your local paper bank.

- Old newspapers can be compressed to make logs (Logmakers, £2995, [naturalcollection.com](http://naturalcollection.com)), then burnt on an eco-friendly carbon-neutral wood-burning stove, from [clearviewstoves.com](http://clearviewstoves.com)

**MOBILE PHONES** Hang on to your old one for as long as possible. If you do need to replace it, take your old model to any Oxfam shop or to The Carphone Warehouse who have a recycling facility in every shop.

**TELEPHONE DIRECTORIES** The dye on the pages means they can't be recycled with other paper and newspaper. To recycle them you should either place them on the compost heap or shred them for animal bedding. Nine out of 10 councils recycle directories; [recycle-more.co.uk](http://recycle-more.co.uk) gives details of what your local council recycles and where.

**GLASSES AND SUNGLASSES** Every year four million pairs of perfectly good glasses are discarded in the UK. Instead of binning them, donate them to the charity Vision Aid Overseas ([vao.org.uk](http://vao.org.uk); 01293 535016) who give them to those who need glasses in developing countries. Or give them to your optician who may subscribe to the scheme. □