



Do You Know the Facts About Paper Recycling?

We hear a lot about paper recycling — but not all of it is accurate. Let's sort through the most common myths and uncover the real facts behind how paper and paper-based packaging is reused.

❌ **The Myth:** Using paper products is wasteful.

✅ **The Fact:** Forests provide us with a renewable and highly recyclable raw material – wood. Paper is recycled more than any other material in the U.S. municipal waste stream, making paper a truly circular product.

The Success of Paper Recycling

Recycling avoids the release of greenhouse gases when paper decomposes in landfills.

By reducing the amount of paper and paperboard products sent to landfills through recycling, greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S. were lowered by 155 million metric tons of CO₂e in 2018. This is equivalent to taking over 33 million cars off the road for an entire year.¹



In 2024, **60% - 64% of paper in the U.S. was recovered for recycling**. The recycling rate for cardboard, which the industry calls **corrugated**, was estimated at **69% - 74%**.¹



Today, more than **2/3 of all paper recycled in the U.S. is turned into new products** that consumers use and rely on everyday. In 2024, nearly half of recycled paper went into making containerboard — the material used to make cardboard boxes.¹



According to the most recent government data available, **paper and paper packaging are recycled more than any other material in the U.S. solid waste stream**, including plastics (9%), glass (31%) and metals (34%).²



✗ **The Myth:** Only recycled paper should be used to make new paper products.

✓ **The Fact:** The continuous input of wood fiber from sustainably managed forests is essential to the paper production cycle.



54% of U.S. consumers surveyed believe only recycled paper should be used to make new paper products.³ However, there is a need for both recycled fiber and new, fresh fiber in the manufacturing process. Depending on the type of product being made and the required strength and brightness, both types of fiber may be needed for the manufacturing process.

The U.S. paper industry continues to invest in recycling projects that will result in the use of over 4.5 million additional tons of recovered fiber.⁴



Why Papermaking Needs New Fiber

Every time paper is recycled, the fibers get shorter and weaker. Several factors determine how many times paper fiber can be recycled, including quality requirements, fiber age, utilization rates and intended uses. Recyclability studies show that paper fiber reuse can range from 5 to 25 times depending on various factors with most only used between 5 - 7 times. There is always a limit to the number of times fiber can be recycled, and a constant need for new fiber to be introduced into the process.⁵

Fresh fiber from sustainably managed forests is constantly needed to compensate for the retirement of degraded fiber, archival storage of paper (books, records, etc.), and loss of fiber through regular use and disposal of certain non-recyclable paper products, such as personal hygiene and tissue products.⁶

Sources

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2. [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\), 2018](#)
3. [Two Sides NA, 2025 | Trend Tracker Report](#)
4. [AF&PA, 2025](#)
5. [National Council for Air and Stream Improvement \(NCASI\), 2023 | Recyclability of Paper](#)
6. [Sustainable Forest Products, 2015 | Fresh and Recycled Fiber](#)

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Print, Paper and
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have a great
environmental
story to tell

