

Lab Packaging Waste Reduction Guide

This effort supports U-M's sustainability goal of reducing waste sent to landfills by 40%.

Packaging produces numerous hard-to-dispose-of materials.
What will you do to help minimize the impact?



What **YOU**
can do
to reduce
packaging
waste in
YOUR
lab space!



The 4 Rs

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Packaging Waste Reduction

1. REFUSE/RETHINK

The best thing you can do to reduce packaging waste is to avoid purchases to the extent possible.

Rethink customs and processes by asking yourself, "Do I have to do it this way or is this just the way it has always been done?"

3. REUSE

The third most impactful approach is reuse.

Instead of discarding packaging in the landfill or recycling, get creative and find a new life for items. Many 'single-use' items don't need to be single use at all!

2. REDUCE

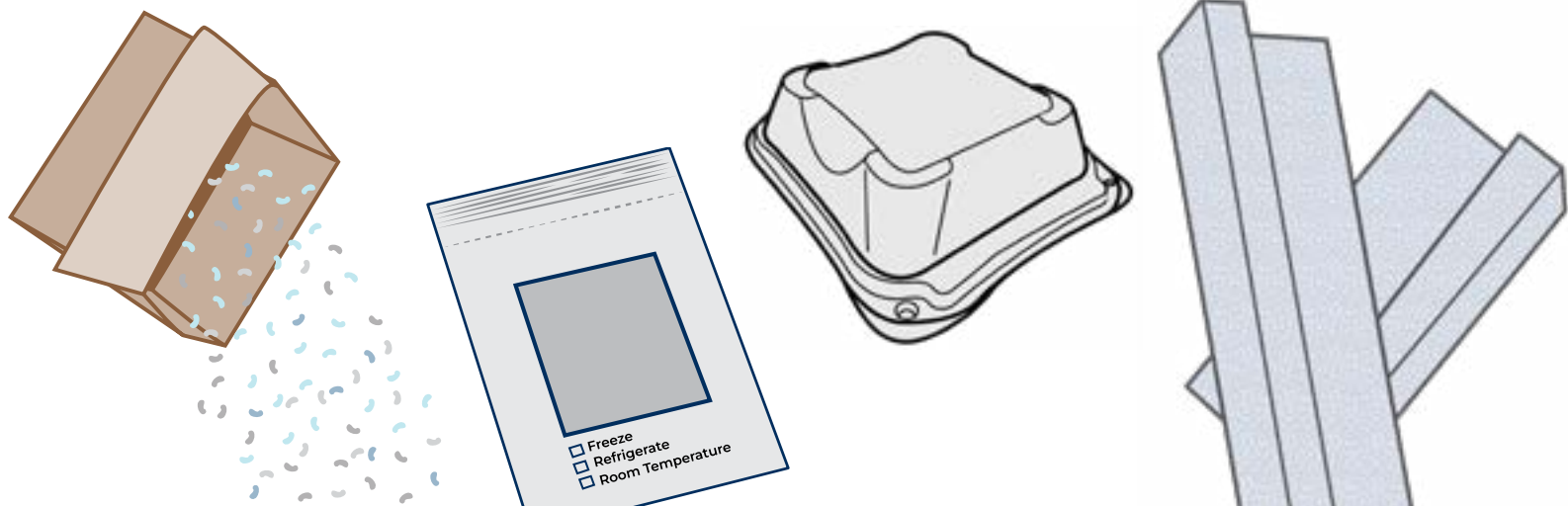
The second best thing you can do is reduce the amount of packaging waste created.

Consolidate orders to reduce the number of shipments, or purchase items that use less packaging.

4. RECYCLE

Recycling is often viewed as the golden ticket for waste reduction.

While it's one way to make a difference, it should be the last resort. Recycling ends the lifecycle of that object, while contributing to the creation of something new.



Refuse/Rethink

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THE BEST PLACE TO START

ONLY ORDER WHAT YOU NEED

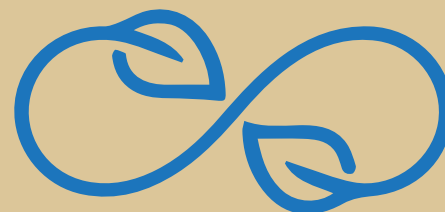
Keep an up-to-date inventory to avoid overbuying.

Consider smaller-scale experiments that require fewer supplies.



PARTICIPATE IN THE LAB REUSE PROGRAM

Conduct lab cleanouts every 6 months and assess what you can donate to [Lab Reuse](#) and what you need to swap from it.



REFUSE SINGLE-USE ITEMS WHEN YOU CAN

Look into investing in things like [pipet reload systems](#) or tube washers. Choose glass labware over disposable plastics when possible.



This helps avoid excess packaging AND reduce the carbon emissions associated with producing and transporting materials.

Reduce

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YOUR BEST NEXT STEP

CHOOSE PRODUCTS WITH LESS PACKAGING

Choose products with [ACT labels](#) indicating lower packaging impacts.

Look for products with legitimate 'green' labels.

- Thermo Fisher puts a [green leaf](#) on products that use fewer resources, are energy efficient, have sustainable packaging, or can be sustainably disposed.
- [Fisher Scientific](#) and [Avantor](#) have similar labels.

ORDER IN BULK WHEN POSSIBLE

Order larger quantities of items you use consistently.

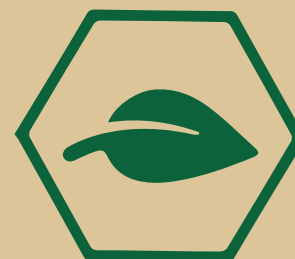
Work with neighboring labs to place orders together.

Do you order something frequently in large quantities?

Consider reaching out to the manufacturer or vendor to inquire about the most efficient order amount to reduce packaging.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CORE STORES

Buildings across campus have [stores](#) where common items can be purchased, reducing the need for individual shipments.



ACT.

The Environmental Impact Factor Label



Reuse

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TRY THIS THIRD

PARTICIPATE IN PACKAGING TAKE-BACK PROGRAMS

[Corning](#) Packaging Return, [Sigma Aldrich Polystyrene Cooler Return Program](#), [Millipore Polystyrene Cooler Return Program](#), and [New England Biolabs Polystyrene Cooler Return Program](#) will all take back packaging for reuse or recycling.

FIND NEW USES FOR PACKAGING MATERIALS

- Use foam coolers to store samples or use them for outgoing shipments
- Reuse cardboard boxes
- Put ice packs in freezers to reduce the energy load on the machine
- Reuse plastic film/bubble wrap for outgoing shipping (give to docks if they need it)

PARTICIPATE IN THE ICE PACK REUSE PROGRAM

U-M is piloting an updated ice pack reuse program! Email sustainable-labs@umich.edu if you are interested in donating packs or know of any potential recipients.



Recycle

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TAKE THIS STEP LAST

USE SINGLE-STREAM RECYCLING

Paper, cardboard, metal, and specific plastics can be placed in recycling bins outside of labs.

RECYCLE CLEAN PACKAGING FOAM (THAT YOU CAN'T SEND BACK!)

Clean (no labels/stickers) and dry foam coolers, packing peanuts, and sheets can be bagged (clear bags) and placed on the docks. Email recycle@umich.edu for pickup.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Contact recycle@umich.edu to pick up [electronic media](#) like CDs, DVDs, and floppy disks.

PIPETTE TIP RECYCLING

Easily [recycle](#) clean pipette tip boxes and inserts of any brand for free. Find boxes with prepaid shipping labels on your building's dock or email sustainable-labs@umich.edu.

PENS/MARKERS/PENCILS AND BOTTLE CAPS

Collect and send these items via campus mail to RecycleWrite or CAP-Ture, respectively, at 109 E Madison St, zip 2993.

