

## Home Electronic Equipment...Don't Just Throw it Away

*Electronic waste, or e-waste, is one of the fastest growing sources of waste in the United States. As our electronic equipment becomes outdated, it's important to think carefully about reusing and recycling materials where possible.*

Advances in technology result in newer equipment continually becoming available for home use. Whether you are looking at computers, monitors, fax machines and copiers, television sets, stereo/audio equipment, cell phones, smartphones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), or game consoles, there always seems to be a newer or better model with innovative features.

E-waste often has hazardous or toxic components that pollute the environment if they are improperly managed. Some of these components, such as heavy metals, are also valuable materials that can be extracted, recycled and reused to make new equipment. As our old electronic equipment becomes outdated, it is important that we think carefully about reusing and recycling materials, instead of just throwing equipment in landfills.



### What to do with your old electronic equipment

If your equipment no longer meets your needs, you have a number of options.

#### [Extend the life of your existing electronics through repair, upgrade or tune-up](#)

Upgrades to existing electronic equipment can add years of use. Check with a local electronics or computer store to see if your electronics can be configured to more appropriately fit your needs. You can often improve the performance of computers through file maintenance and removing unnecessary software. You may also be able to extend the life of your electronic equipment by updating the components yourself or asking a retailer to install new components. You can extend the life of cell phones by installing a new battery from a reputable provider. In the case of computers, even if an older model is not able to handle the newest technology, it still may be perfectly adequate for searching the Internet, word processing, using spreadsheets or otherwise meeting a student's needs.

#### [Give the electronics to someone who can use it](#)

There may be other people who can use your old equipment or collectors looking for replacement parts. When you are finished with your old electronic equipment, check to see if friends, family or others want it. In all cases you should use software or use a service to cleanse your device and remove personal data. Several not-for-profit organizations make used computers and cell phones available to those in need. In some cases, you may be able to sell your equipment. As a starting point, check out these sites.

- Community lists, like Craig's list
- Internet auction sites, like E-Bay

### Sustainable electronics

When it is time to purchase a new electronic device, the choices we make can affect the environment. Some manufacturers consider the impact their products have on the environment and make their products so that they are easier to recycle, more energy efficient and, when disposed of, less harmful to the environment. Here are some examples.

The **EPEAT program** is a comprehensive environmental rating registry that helps identify greener computers and other electronic equipment.

**Energy Star** products are more energy efficient than other similar products.

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- Charitable groups may pick up your used electronics at no cost – check out our [Computer and Electronic Non-Profit and Charity Refurbishers](#) for ones near you.

### Recycle

If you can't find anyone who is interested in using your old electronic equipment, it is time to recycle it. Most electronics are accepted for recycling including batteries, cell phones, computers, lamps and printer cartridges. The [Responsible Recycling Practices \(R2\) and the e-Stewards® standards](#) identify recyclers that meet the accredited standards for safely recycling and managing electronics. Some companies are willing to pay for your used electronics. The following resources may help you find a recycler.

- [Plug into e-Cycling](#) - a partnership between U.S. EPA , consumer electronics manufacturers and retailers offering consumers opportunities to donate or recycle their used electronics.
- [Earth911.com](#) - lets you search for electronic waste recyclers that service your zip code.
- [Call2recycle.org](#) - The Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation has made arrangements to accept cell phones and batteries collected by stores and outlets from consumers. Enter your zip code to find a store or outlet near you that will take your cell phone.
- Ohio EPA maintains a list of [Computer and Electronic Component Recyclers](#).

### Properly dispose of electronic wastes

Electronics contain many materials that are hazardous to the environment when they are disposed. If you cannot give away or recycle your electronic equipment, Ohio EPA recommends using community hazardous waste collection days or retailer electronic waste collection programs. Ohio EPA maintains a [list of local electronic waste and household hazardous waste collection programs](#).

Also check with local businesses to determine if they are Plug into e-Cycling partners or have any collection programs that suit your needs.

### **Where to Get More Help**

If you have any questions about managing your household electronic waste, visit Ohio EPA's [electronic waste webpage](#) or contact the Office of Compliance Assistance and Pollution Prevention at (800) 329-7518.

#### **What About My Business?**

Businesses have different requirements for recycling or disposing of computers and other electronic equipment. For more information, check out the [Management of Electronic Waste from Businesses](#) fact sheet.