

"Green" Options for Using and Recycling Computers



Over a hundred thousand computers become obsolete in our country each day. Many of us have an old one gathering dust in a closet or basement, and don't really know what to do with it. As we learn more about the deleterious effects on our environment of the improper disposal of electronics, both the manufacturers and we, the consumers, will have to take more responsibility for what happens when we are done with these items.

What you can do to dispose of electronics more responsibly:

- **Participate in your town's electronics recycling program** - don't just throw these items out with your trash. Contact your town/city hall, DPW, or www.earth911.com for information about appliance/electronics disposal. Make sure to attend to the "scrubbing" instructions below.
- **Donate your computer for reuse** to organizations such as: Solutions at Work, Recycle Computers 4 Cancer, Tecschange.org, YouthBuild Boston, the Salvation Army, and the Cristina Foundation. Or donate to thrift stores that have charitable partners - locally you can try Savers (West Roxbury), Urban Renewal (Brighton), or Global Thrift (Waltham). Call first to check which electronics they are currently accepting, and make sure to see the scrubbing instructions below.
- **Many computer/electronics companies and stores offer recycling opportunities as well as incentives for recycling or "exchanging" your electronics.** Check the programs of manufacturers such as Dell, HP, Apple and Gateway, as well as stores such as Staples, Office Max and Best Buy. Again, attend to the scrubbing instructions below.
- Check out the helpful information on recycling electronics of all sizes at **eBay rethink**: <http://pages.ebay.com/rethink/>, www.earth911.com, www.eiae.org, www.greendisk.com, or www.ci.newton.ma.us/dpw/recycling/residents/odd_materials.htm (the "Recyclopedia", from my town, Newton, MA.) And remember scrubbing!

"Scrubbing" and Identity Theft: To avoid identity theft, computers need to be properly "scrubbed" before they are donated. This isn't easy to do and usually involves the assistance of a tech-savvy

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individual. If you are getting a new computer and using a tech consultant, that person could "scrub" your old computer for you, enabling you to then donate it to a charitable resource. Or perhaps you will feel confident to buy the proper software and do this scrubbing on your own. If you can't scrub, you will need to take the hard drive out and destroy it yourself, and then have the rest of the computer parts recycled.

"Green" tips about buying and using computers:

- **Try to wait longer until you buy that new computer** - do you really *need* a faster machine with new bells and whistles? The longer you wait, the "greener" the options will be for new computers.
- **Give your existing computer a boost:** More RAM, a better video card, a processor upgrade, and regular maintenance tactics (e.g. anti-virus scans, spyware checks, disk "defragging" and cleanup), can all improve a computer's functioning.
- **Utilize your computer's options for saving energy.**
- **Buy from a company that has a good "green record"** - in terms of both manufacturing practices and materials used. Look for "Energy Star" products.
- **Buy from a company that has a good recycling program**, one that will take the computer back from you when you are done with it, and refurbish it or responsibly dispose of the parts.
- Look into buying a **"refurbished" computer**.
- If you are going to upgrade in a year or two, **consider leasing electronics**. Leasing usually extends the useful life of a computer, insuring that it will be refurbished or responsibly recycled.