



Back-to-School Checklist

~ Green Choices for School, Home, or Office ~

- ✓ **Paper:** Look for paper with as much recycled content as possible. Paper with recycled content will generally state two numbers, for instance: *75% recycled; 25% post consumer waste (PCW)*. This means the 75% recycled content is comprised of 25% recycled from “used” paper and 50% from mill scraps or other unused paper. Purchasing recycled paper with a high PCW percentage is desirable because you are saving trees as well as diverting waste from landfills. For information on specific products, see: <http://www.newdream.org/buy/bts/paper.php> or <http://www.conservatree.org/paper/AddlProductsOfc.shtml>.
- ✓ **Notebooks:** Notebooks can also be made from recycled materials. Many popular notebook binders are made from vinyl, a substance which is particularly damaging to the environment as well as to human health. When vinyl is manufactured, the carcinogen dioxin is released into the air and water from factories. If you buy notebooks with recycled vinyl, you can prevent more vinyl from being manufactured. There are also notebooks made of alternative materials such as rubber from old tires.
- ✓ **Pencils/ Pens:** There are two things to consider here – what materials the pencils and pens are made of and how long they will last. Avoid anything disposable, because it will quickly end up in a landfill. Refillable pens and pencils can be used many times. If you choose to buy wooden pencils, look for brands that are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), meaning the wood was harvested in a sustainable manner. Pencils made from recycled materials, such as rubber or plastic, are also available.
- ✓ **Computers:** Look for Energy Star computers; they use less energy than other equipment. Another consideration is what happens to computer equipment (as well as other electronics) at the end of its lifespan. Computers contain a great many toxic metals, which leach into the environment when these items are discarded. Some manufacturers take back old computers and reuse the component materials. For information on responsible manufacturers of computers, see: http://svtc.etoxics.org/site/PageServer?pagename=svtc_guide_to_electronics_purchasing.
- ✓ **Printers:** If you’re purchasing a new printer, look for one that prints duplex – on both sides of a sheet of paper. If you already own a printer, you may be able to purchase a duplexer to attach to it, depending on the model. By doing this you will cut your paper use in half and have printouts and files that are half as thick.
- ✓ **Batteries:** Use rechargeable batteries to limit toxic substances being released into the environment. Nickel Metal Hydride (NiMH) batteries are far less toxic than the popular NiCad batteries. To see where you can recycle batteries and other items in your area, check <http://www.earth911.org>



You can request that your local vendors carry these items or suggest that your local school order some of these products in bulk to sell to parents at a discount.

To learn more about how you can make a difference for birds, other wildlife, and the environment, visit www.audubonathome.org .