

BUYING SCHOOL SUPPLIES WITH THE EARTH IN MIND

The following information about earth-friendly back-to-school shopping is taken from <http://www.newdream.org/buy/bts/index.php> and <http://www.grist.org/advice/possessions/>. Both Staples and Office Depot offer a number of products with high recycled content.

PAPER AND NOTEBOOKS:

Doodle Responsibly

It's hard to believe, but paper used to be a rare commodity. Now it's everywhere. Reduce the burden on trees and cut paper-making pollution by choosing paper that is "tree-free" or made with the highest possible post-consumer waste (PCW) recycled content, and hasn't been bleached with chlorine. (Oh, and use both sides.)

Printer paper

The prime stuff: Look for these 100% PCW recycled papers in your local office supply store. They are also available online from **Treecycle**.

- **New Leaf Everest paper**
- **Badger Envirographic paper**
- **Eureka! 100**

Notebooks

Tops Second Nature notebooks (60% recycled content, 30% post consumer waste) are widely available in stores, or online from **Green Earth Office Supply**.

What to buy

When shopping for paper, look for:

- Paper with the highest post-consumer recycled content
- Process-chlorine free or totally-chlorine free paper
- Paper products made from sustainably managed forests or from alternative "tree free" fibers

PENS AND PENCILS:

Get the "write" stuff

Think writing instruments don't add up to much? Consider this: More than 14 billion pencils are produced every year – enough to circle the globe 62 times. Add to that the billions upon billions of pens, highlighters, crayons, and markers, and suddenly that's a lot of materials. Buying post-consumer recycled materials reduces the burden on natural resources. Buying products made with FSC-certified wood helps insure that when new wood is cut, it is done in a more responsible manner that is better for the forest and its inhabitants. Reduce the burden on forests and other natural resources with these pens and pencils from recycled products and sustainably harvested wood.

Pens

Green Earth Office Supply Pens – made from recycled materials and biodegradable cornstarch.

Pencils

Paper Mate EarthWrite recycled pencils can be found at most office supply stores. If you can't find them locally, get them online at **Green Earth Office Supply**.

Dixon-Ticonderoga pencils are a good choice and found in stores everywhere. They don't advertise it, but they're made from sustainably-harvested wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). FSC-certified pencils are also available online from **Forest Choice**. Want to be truly green? Get green pencils made from recycled money. Or go blue with pencils made using reclaimed denim from jean manufactures.

BACKPACKS:

Make your backpack lighter (on the Earth, that is)

We can't lighten your course load but we can show you where to find backpacks that are easier on the Earth. Drop that pack made with vinyl and go for a stylish hemp or recycled rubber backpack.

- **Green Earth Office Supply**
- **Hemp Sisters**
- **Global Exchange**
- **Greenhome**
- **Dank Forest hemp packs**

Or fix it!

Perfectly good pack. Busted zipper. Don't toss it! Before you chuck that old bag, check with the maker. **JanSport** is one company that will fix its packs for free. Just mail yours in and they'll mail it back with a new set of teeth! Or find out if a local repair shop can do the job cheaply. Just open the yellow pages to "luggage repair."

Why it's important

The vinyl found in many backpacks is actually polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a substance with a very bad environmental record. When PVC is made or burned for disposal, dioxins – linked to cancer and developmental and reproductive disorders – are released into the environment. Dioxins persist in nature for many years and accumulate in the tissues of animal and people, moving up the food chain until they reach us. PVC production and disposal facilities are also typically located in low-income neighborhoods, producing pollutants that damage the health of people living nearby.

CLOTHING:

When looking for new clothes for the new school year, try to find organic, pesticide-free cotton or clothing made from hemp. According to the EPA, seven of the top 15 pesticides used on U.S. cotton crops are thought to be human carcinogens. Hemp products are preferred to cotton because they can be produced using much fewer pesticides. Also, try to stay away from polyester as it is made mostly from petroleum-based chemicals. A few places to find eco-friendly clothing are

- **Garden Kids**
- **Patagonia**
- **Grass Roots Natural Goods**

Or better yet, use hand-me-downs!

REDUCE REUSE REPAIR RECYCLE