



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

Sustainable Offices Waste Badge Checklist



Sustainable Offices: Waste Badge Checklist

The world continues to use natural resources unsustainably, it is our responsibility to ensure we are producing and consuming sustainably.

When we make more sustainable decisions about how we reduce and sort our waste on a daily basis, we help transform UCalgary into a zero waste community:

Almost 90 per cent of the waste we produce on campus is recyclable or compostable when sorted correctly. By using the Sustainable Offices Waste Badge Checklist below to minimize and divert the waste that you produce, your office will help advance UCalgary's waste reduction goals.

How to use this Checklist

- Lead your colleagues to complete all required action items on the Health, Wellbeing and Community Badge Checklist over a period of at least three months.
- Use the checklist to keep track of your successes and new habits as you go, checking off all action items that you have completed.
- **To learn more about how and why to achieve each action item listed in the Checklist, click the icon in the "How/Why?" column. Use the supporting documents in the appendix as needed.**
- To earn the Waste Badge, complete all nine required action items.
- To earn a gold Waste badge, complete the nine required items and two exemplary action items.
- When you are ready to submit your form, please collect brief testimonials from three different members of your office to illustrate the impact of your efforts on your office. Use the testimonials page in this PDF document or attach a separate word document to your final email to sustain@ucalgary.ca
- A representative from the Office of Sustainability will review your checklist within one week. When it is approved, you will be sent a confirmation email with the virtual badge, and your physical Health, Wellbeing and Community badge decal will be made available for pickup at the Sustainability Resource Centre.

Certification levels



Waste Badge:
All Required actions



Gold Waste Badge:
All Required and Exemplary
actions

Need more Information?

For more information, tools and supporting resources, consult the [Sustainable Offices website](#). If you have any questions or comments about the Sustainable Offices program, please contact sustain@ucalgary.ca.

Sustainable Offices Waste Badge Checklist

Required action items

Complete these nine action items to earn a Waste Badge.

1. We audit our waste

- Our office has conducted at least two waste audits a minimum of three months apart.
- We have discussed the results of both audits with our team.
- We have used the results of our first waste audit to inform an education or outreach initiative focused on improving our waste reduction or diversion rates before conducting our second audit.(See action item 9 for more information.)

Why/How?



2. We take action to minimize and divert how much waste we produce.

- Our office has planned and executed at least one office-wide waste reduction initiative in the past six months.
- We have submitted a photo or testimonial documenting our event or initiative to the Office of Sustainability.

Why/How?



3. We use the mixed and refundable beverage container recycling streams to dispose of our everyday recyclables.

- All desks in our office have a desk-side mixed recycling bin.
- We have removed all desk-side trash bins from our office.
- We sort our everyday recyclables into the mixed recycling and refundable beverage container bins located in the kitchenette or hallway closest to our office.
- We empty recyclable food or beverage containers before recycling them.
- We dispose of glass items safely.

Why/How?



4. We use the appropriate recycling stream to dispose of our unusual recyclables.

- In the past year, we have completed at least one request for furniture, appliance, scrap metal, printer ink or toner cartridge or e-waste disposal through Supply Chain Management.
- We use the textile recycling bins on campus to dispose of our used textiles.

Why/How?



5. We compost our organic waste.

- We use the compost bins located in the kitchenette or hallway nearest our office to dispose of our organic waste and compostable items.

Why/How?



6. We use reusable or compostable dishes, cutlery and serving ware.

- We keep reusable cups, mugs, dishware and utensils in our kitchenette or common area for our staff to use, and we use them during meetings where food or beverages are served.
- If we can't store or wash dishes in our office, we use BPI-certified compostable alternatives instead of paper or plastic serving ware.

Why/How?



7. We minimize the waste created by single-use and disposable items.**Why/How?**

- We have replaced all single-use items with full-sized or reusable alternatives.
- We do not have plastic straws, plastic stir sticks, single-serving milks and creamers, sugar, salt or condiment packets in our office.



8. We print sustainably.**Why/How?**

- The printers in our office are set to print double-sided by default.
- We keep a stack of single-sided and/or waste paper in our copy or mail room for staff to reuse as scrap paper.
- We recycle all used printer ink and toner cartridges.
- We have posted the Reducing Paper Waste resource near central printers to remind one another to print double-sided and use scrap paper whenever possible.



9. We recycle our used batteries and cellphones.**Why/How?**

- We have designated a bin for used battery and cellphone collection in our office.
- We have established a schedule for a designated staff person to drop these items off at a campus collection site to be recycled.
- We have made at least one used battery or cellphone drop-off in the past six months.



Exemplary action items**Complete these two additional action items to earn a gold Waste Badge**

10. We minimize and compost our coffee waste | Exemplary action item**Why/How?**

- We use a drip coffee machine in our kitchenette or common area rather than a disposable coffee pod machine (i.e. Keurig or Nespresso). If we cannot use a drip coffee machine, we only use refillable or compostable coffee pods.
- We compost all coffee grounds after use.



11. We use reusable mugs and bottles every day | Exemplary action item**Why/How?**

- At least 75 per cent of our office drinks from reusable mugs, glasses and/or bottles on a regular basis instead of using to-go cups or plastic bottles.



Testimonies

Waste Badge testimonies, feedback and stories

Collect brief testimonials from three different members of your office to illustrate the impact of your efforts. To capture a diversity of perspectives, include a testimonial from one leader, one member of your Sustainable Offices Committee and one office member not involved in the committee's work.

Do you have comments, questions or stories to share from your office's efforts to earn your Waste Badge? Would you like to recognize a team member for their sustainability leadership? Please share your feedback and stories with us below.

Testimony 1

Testimony 2

Testimony 3

Waste Badge Completion Form

Instructions

After your office has completed all of the required items in the Waste Badge Checklist, please fill out the Completion Form below. Email your completed Checklist .pdf to the Sustainability Resource Centre at sustain@ucalgary.ca. We look forward to celebrating your office for its sustainability leadership!

Sustainable Office details

Name of department or office:

Name of faculty or business unit:

Location of office:

Number of Sustainable Office participants:

Staff

Faculty

Students

Has any of the above information changed since you submitted your Sustainable Offices Registration Form? If so, please explain briefly below.

Lead program contact details

Name:

Role, department/office, faculty/business unit:

Email and telephone number:

Date badge was started:

My signature below confirms that, to the best of my knowledge, all action items marked as “Complete” in this form have been practiced by at least 75 per cent of the people on our team/ in our office for at least three months.

Lead program contact signature:

Date badge was completed:

Appendix A: How/ Why Section

1. We audit our waste.

Why?

Conducting a waste audit will give you a clear picture of your office's current strengths and opportunities for reducing waste and improving diversion rates. Armed with your audit data, you will be able to create a more specific and targeted engagement or outreach plan to improve your office's waste management practices. You will also be able to track your progress towards your goals more accurately and to track your progress more accurately.

How?

Use the results of your first audit to set concrete goals to minimize how much waste you produce and to improve your diversion rate. Discuss your goals with your team. Plan an engagement or outreach initiative that will build your office's capacity to meet these goals, and use the results of your second audit to assess your progress towards them. Consult [Appendix B: Conducting a Waste Audit](#) resource for further instructions and support.

Supporting Resources:

[Appendix B: Conducting a Waste Audit resource](#)

2. We take action to minimize and divert how much waste we produce.

Why?

Working together to plan, execute and participate in an education or outreach initiative focused on waste diversion or reduction will help your office reduce its waste while building awareness, enthusiasm and a sense of community.

How?

Depending on the goals you set during your waste audit, you may wish to organize a reusable bottle or mug contest, a workplace cleanout day or an e-waste drive. Whatever you do, be creative and make it fun! When you have completed your waste reduction initiative, please email a photo or testimonial documenting your efforts to sustain@ucalgary.ca.

3. We use the mixed and refundable beverage container recycling streams to dispose of our everyday recyclables

Why?

When the closest option for waste disposal is a trash bin, many recyclable items will be thrown in the garbage out of convenience. By making mixed and refundable beverage container recycling bins more accessible than trash bins, you will make it easier for your coworkers to sort their recyclables into the appropriate stream, maximizing how many of these items are diverted from the landfill.

You can also help to keep more recyclables out of the landfill by emptying your food and drink containers before recycling. It only takes one half-full drink to contaminate an entire bag of recycling, so be sure to empty your cups before sorting them. Broken glass can also contaminate recycling streams and poses a workplace hazard for caretakers.

Supporting Resources:

[Facilities Waste and Recycling Page](#)

[ARCHIBUS Work Request](#)

How?

Four-stream waste stations containing mixed recycling and refundable beverage container recycling bins are located near or within all offices and kitchenettes.

Mixed recycling includes paper, cardboard, coffee cups and sleeves (not lids), non-refundable glass containers, tinfoil and plastics marked 1 to 7 (including plastic that stretches, like cling film). Refundable beverage containers include plastic and glass drink containers, juice and milk cartons, tetrapaks and aluminum cans.

If you have questions about which recycling stream an item belongs in, consult the [Facilities Waste and Recycling page](#) or contact the Facilities Customer Care team at myfacilities@ucalgary.ca.

If your office does not currently have mixed recycling bins at all desks, use the [ARCHIBUS Work Request tool](#) to request them.

Glass items can be placed gently in the mixed recycling bin. Dispose of any broken glass safely by wrapping it in paper or plastic before placing it in the trash.

4. We use the appropriate recycling stream to dispose of our unusual recyclables.

Why?

Did you know that UCalgary currently diverts a total of 20 waste streams from the landfill? By recycling, reusing or reselling unusual items like furniture, appliances, scrap metal, printer ink or toner cartridges and e-waste, Supply Chain Management (SCM) gives these items new life elsewhere. When these items cannot be reused or resold, SCM ensures that they are disposed of appropriately.

Used clothing, towels and other textiles aren't always in a condition fit to be donated. When you dispose of them in a campus textile recycling bin, however, their fibers can be recycled and remade into new textiles.

How?

Consult the Facilities Waste and Recycling page to determine which recyclable items are most common in your office. Sharing a sustainability moment about these streams in a team meeting will help to build awareness about recycling unusual items in your office.

Designate a staff person to contact SCM with any requests for pickup and disposal. All service request forms are found in [my.ucalgary.ca > My Work > Finance and Supply Chain > SCM Service Request Forms](#).

Textile recycling bins can be found outside of the Dining Centre and Yamnuska Hall. Please bundle your office's used textiles together in a bag before dropping them off in the bin.

Supporting Resources:

[Supply Chain Management Facilities Waste and Recycling Page](#)

5. We compost our organic waste.

Why?

When compostable items end up in the landfill, they cannot turn into compost because there is no oxygen. Instead, their decomposition releases methane (a greenhouse gas 25 times more potent than carbon dioxide) and leachate, a toxic liquid that can contaminate the soil. When we compost our organic waste instead, it breaks down quickly into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner that can be used to help grow new food. Compost facilities also produce much less methane than landfills, limiting the volume of the most dangerous greenhouse gases emitted during waste decomposition.

Supporting Resource(s):

[Facilities Waste and Recycling Page](#)

How?

Four-stream waste stations containing compost bins are located near or within all offices and kitchenettes. For more information about the closest four-stream waste station to your office, please contact the Facilities Customer Care team at myfacilities@ucalgary.ca.

Common compostable items include food waste, teabags, coffee grinds, wooden stir sticks, wooden chopsticks, used paper towels, used napkins and wet or soiled cardboard or paper products (including greasy pizza boxes, paper bags and compostable clamshells from MacEwan Hall food vendors).

If you are using an unserviced countertop compost bin to collect your compost, establish a regular schedule for emptying it into the nearest serviced bin and cleaning it. Ensure that all staff are aware of and/or participate in the schedule.

6. We use reusable or compostable dishes, cutlery and serving ware.

Why?

Over its lifecycle, a ceramic mug needs less energy to produce, sends less waste to the landfill and produces fewer greenhouse gases than using a disposable paper coffee cup every day. Because reusable dishware requires more energy and resources to produce up front, however, regular and ongoing use of a limited number of dishes will ensure that you minimize as much waste as possible over time.

Food contamination makes it hard to recycle used paper and plastic dishes. Using compostable dishes, cutlery and serving ware is the best way to keep paper and plastic waste out of the landfill when reusable dishware is not an option.

Supporting Resources:

[Conference and Events Management](#)
[U of C Food Services](#)
[MacKwan](#)

How?

Keep reusable dishes, cutlery and serving ware in your kitchenette or common area for staff to use throughout the day. Use these dishes to serve food and drinks at all meetings.

If you do not have space to store reusable dishes, cutlery and serving ware in your office, purchase compostable dishes, cups and cutlery instead of paper or plastic alternatives. Conference and Event Management (Aramark), University of Calgary Food Services (Aramark), and MacEwan Conference and Event Centre provide compostable dishes, cups, cutlery and napkins with all delivery/ drop-off orders.

7. We minimize the waste created by single-use and disposable items.

Why?

Most single-use items cannot be recycled or composted and create unnecessary landfill waste. By replacing these items with full-sized or reusable alternatives, you can reduce the daily packaging waste that your office sends to the landfill.

How?

Purchase dairy or milk, creamer, sugar, salt and condiments in bulk containers. Wherever possible, serve these items from reusable containers (i.e. a sugar bowl or salt shaker) rather than as single servings.

Use reusable spoons instead of plastic stir sticks for coffee.

Keep a set of reusable straws in your kitchenette for staff to borrow as needed.

8. We print sustainably.

Why?

With all of the University's central printers printing an average of just two-thirds of all documents double-sided, we save over two million pages per year — that's around 200 trees. The more documents you print double-sided, the more paper you will save.

Sometimes we have to print single-sided, but keeping any extra printouts on hand to reuse as notepaper helps to ensure that you are getting as much use out of each sheet of paper as you can.

Ninety-seven per cent of the plastic, rubber and metals in ink and toner cartridges can be recycled reducing the energy and resources needed to make new cartridges and keeping the toxic heavy metals found in printer ink out of the landfill.

How?

Set your office shared printers to print double-sided by default.

Keep a tray of waste paper near central printers for staff to reuse as scrap paper.

Post the [Appendix D: Reducing Paper Waste](#) resource near central printers to remind your colleagues to print double-sided and reuse scrap paper whenever possible.

[Supply Chain Management](#) collects used ink and toner cartridges. To schedule a pickup, complete an Equipment Disposal request form at my.ucalgary.ca

Supporting Resources:

[Supply Chain Management](#)

[Appendix D: Reducing Paper Waste](#)

9. We recycle our used batteries and cellphones.

Why?

Many of the chemicals in batteries and cellphones, such as nickel and cadmium, are extremely toxic. When sent to the landfill, these toxins leach into the soil and harm our environment. Additionally, batteries and cellphones contain precious metals and/or plastics that can be reused when recycled responsibly, reducing the demand for the raw materials needed to manufacture new batteries and cellphones.

Supporting Resource(s):

Learn more about the [Bell Blue Box program](#)

Learn more about the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#)

How?

UCalgary collects used batteries and cellphones at several sites on campus. Collected cellphones are sent to the [Bell Blue Box program](#), which donates its proceeds to the [Canadian Mental Health Association](#).

Designate a bin for battery and cellphone collection in a common area in your office, and establish a regular schedule for one or more people to drop these items off at one of the designated sites on campus. Consult the [Facilities Waste and Recycling page](#) to locate the nearest collection site to your office.

10. We minimize and compost our coffee waste | Exemplary Action

Why?

Using a drip coffee machine to make coffee creates less plastic waste than coffee pods. Even better, the grounds contain nitrogen, which helps produce nutrient-rich compost. By most estimates, coffee pods also cost at least four or five times as much as coffee beans or grounds.

With regular use, refillable coffee pods offer a low-waste alternative to plastic disposable ones. While the City of Calgary's compost facilities cannot process compostable coffee pods, some brands produce a **BPI-certified compostable pod** that is acceptable as compost at UCalgary. BPI certification confirms that a material will decompose quickly and completely when composted, leaving no persistent synthetic residues behind.

Supporting Resource(s):

[BPI Certification](#)

[Coffee Pod Facts](#)

How?

Invest in a drip coffee machine or a set of refillable coffee pods and filters for your office kitchenette. If you are making a switch away from disposable coffee pods, use the [Coffee Pod Facts](#) resource to guide your conversation with your colleagues.

If you would rather use compostable coffee pods, ensure that you are purchasing **BPI-certified compostable** pods to make sure that the brand you purchase is compatible with the University's compost stream. Avoid pods marked as "biodegradable": these cannot go in the compost. While these will eventually break down, they are not guaranteed to degrade at the same rate or into the same quality of end product as organic materials or items certified "compostable."

11. We use reusable mugs and bottles every day | Exemplary action item.

Why?

With regular use, reusable mugs and bottles will use less energy and fewer resources while generating less waste than disposable alternatives. Getting in the habit of carrying a reusable mug or bottle will help minimize waste over the long term.

Supporting Resource(s):

[Take Action Page](#)

[Appendix C: Sample Mug and Bottle Use Survey Questions](#)

How?

Keep reusable mugs and glassware in your kitchenette or common area for staff to use throughout the day.

Use the [Fill it Forward](#) app to track the waste you divert, the emissions you save and the ocean pollution you prevent every time you use your mug or bottle.

Talk to or survey your coworkers to assess their current habits and attitudes regarding reusable mugs and/or bottles. Use [Appendix C: Sample Mug and Bottle Use Survey Questions](#) provided to guide your survey. Discuss your findings with your team, or share a resource from our [Take Action Page](#) about reusable beverage containers in a team meeting.

Appendix B: Conducting a Waste Audit

Conducting a Waste Audit

What is a visual waste audit?

A visual waste audit assesses how much and what kinds of waste office members produce and whether they are sorting their waste into the correct streams, allowing your office to identify ongoing waste diversion challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Because it's a visual waste audit, no special equipment is required and no one needs to get their hands dirty. While you will look at the contents of your office's waste bins, you will not need to weigh their contents or open the bags.

The four main waste streams at the University of Calgary are:

1. **Mixed recycling:** materials that can be re-processed into new products when free from contaminants (i.e. paper, plastic containers with recycling symbol #1-7, stretchable plastic like cling film, tinfoil, cardboard)
2. **Refundable beverage containers:** beverage containers that can be cleaned and reused or reprocessed to make a new container (i.e.: milk cartons, Tetrapaks, plastic beverage bottles, aluminum cans)
3. **Compost:** food waste, organic materials and BPI-certified compostable items that will break down in a compost facility (i.e. compostable clamshells, coffee grounds, wooden chopsticks and stir sticks, paper napkins)
4. **Trash or landfill:** materials that cannot be reused or salvaged must go to the landfill (i.e. Styrofoam, composite packaging that mixes plastic and foil, disposable coffee cup lids)

What do you need?

- Audit sheet (see p. 3)
- Pencil
- Rubber gloves (optional)

How to conduct a visual waste audit

1. Identify high-traffic waste bins in and around your office space and select between one and five bins to audit.
 - **TIP:** Auditing trash bins helps you assess how many potentially recyclable or compostable items are currently going to landfill, while auditing recycling or compost bins lets you assess how much those streams are being contaminated by non-recyclable or -compostable items.
2. Look at the contents of each bin, estimating how many items belong to each waste stream (mixed recycling, refundable beverage containers, compost and trash). Take notes in the **Visual Waste Audit Worksheet** (p. 3).
3. Use the data you collect to identify your office's main waste diversion challenges. Use the questions outlined in the **Waste Audit Action Plan** on p. 2 to set short- and long-term goals for your office.

Safety First!

Health and Safety Tips for Conducting a Visual Waste Audit

- Do not open bags of garbage or touch anything in the garbage or recycling bins. This is **strictly a visual estimation** of the waste contents of the bag.
- **Wear gloves** and make sure to **wash your hands thoroughly** after completing the waste audit.

Tips and tricks

- If you are looking at a clear bag, try lifting it out of the waste bin to give you a closer look at the contents.
- Try to identify:
 - Items from **all four waste streams** (mixed recyclables, refundable beverage containers, compost, trash)
 - Which items appear **most frequently** in your office's waste bins?
 - Which items are most **frequently sorted into the wrong bins** in your office?

Waste Audit Action Plan

Work through the following steps with your colleagues to develop clear, attainable goals for waste reduction and/or diversion in your office.

1. **Have a discussion.** What are your office's current strengths? Did you notice anything in your waste audit that you are proud of? Where do you see opportunities to reduce how much waste your office produces and/or to improve how your office sorts its waste?
2. **Use your audit results to set a waste diversion goal for your office.** If you noticed that a lot of food waste was being thrown in your office's trash bins, for example, you could try to decrease the volume of compost in the trash by 10% by the time you conduct your next audit. When setting your goal, consider:
 - What does your office need to do to achieve this goal?
 - Which office members will need to be involved for you to be successful?
 - How long will it take your office to achieve this goal?
 - When will you conduct your next audit to measure your progress?
3. **Use your audit results to inform future education or outreach initiatives.** For example, if your waste audit shows that your office is throwing a lot of recyclable coffee cups in the trash, you could plan an initiative encouraging your colleagues to recycle them – or to drink out of a reusable mug instead.

Visual Waste Audit Worksheet

Names of office members involved:

Faculty/business unit,
office/department:

Date:

Location:

Waste Category	Example	Bin 1 Estimated %	Bin 2 Estimated %	Bin 3 Estimated %	Bin 4 Estimated %	Bin 5 Estimated %	Average % across all bins
Refundable Beverage Containers (plastic bottles, Tetrapaks, milk cartons, aluminum cans)	15%						
Mixed Recyclables (coffee cups, paper, cardboard, aluminum foil, cling film, most plastics marked #1-7)	10%						
Compostables (food waste, tea bags, coffee grounds and filters, compostable clamshells, wooden chopsticks/stir sticks)	20%						
Landfill (plastic straws, non-stretchable plastics, composite materials, coffee cup lids)	50%						
Other Recyclables (e-waste, printer/toner cartridges, batteries)	5%						
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Appendix C: Sample Mug and Bottle Use Survey Questions

Sample Mug and Bottle Use Survey Questions

Use or adapt these questions as needed to assess your colleagues' current attitudes and habits regarding reusable mug and/or bottle use. You may wish to circulate these questions as part of an online survey or to use them to guide discussion during a sustainability moment. Sharing a survey before and after an education or outreach initiative that encourages mug or bottle use is a great way to assess how your colleagues' attitudes have changed.

The University of Calgary has acquired the [Qualtrics online survey tool](#) and has made it freely available to current employees (faculty and staff), registered University of Calgary students and the Students' Union administration. If you have questions about Qualtrics or would like to learn more about how to use the tool, please consult the [training documents](#) offered through the Office of Institutional Analysis.

1. How often do you use a reusable mug or bottle?

- Use this question to assess the frequency of your colleagues' reusable mug or bottle use.
- To complete action item 11 for the gold Waste badge, 75 per cent of your coworkers should respond "often" or "always" to this question.
 - a. **Always.** I won't purchase a drink if I don't have my mug with me!
 - b. **Often.** I use my mug or bottle regularly at my desk, but sometimes buy hot drinks in disposable cups.
 - c. **Sometimes.** I use my mug when I can, but I find it hard to remember to carry it with me.
 - d. **Rarely.** I own a reusable mug, but I don't use it often.
 - e. **Never.** I don't own a reusable mug.

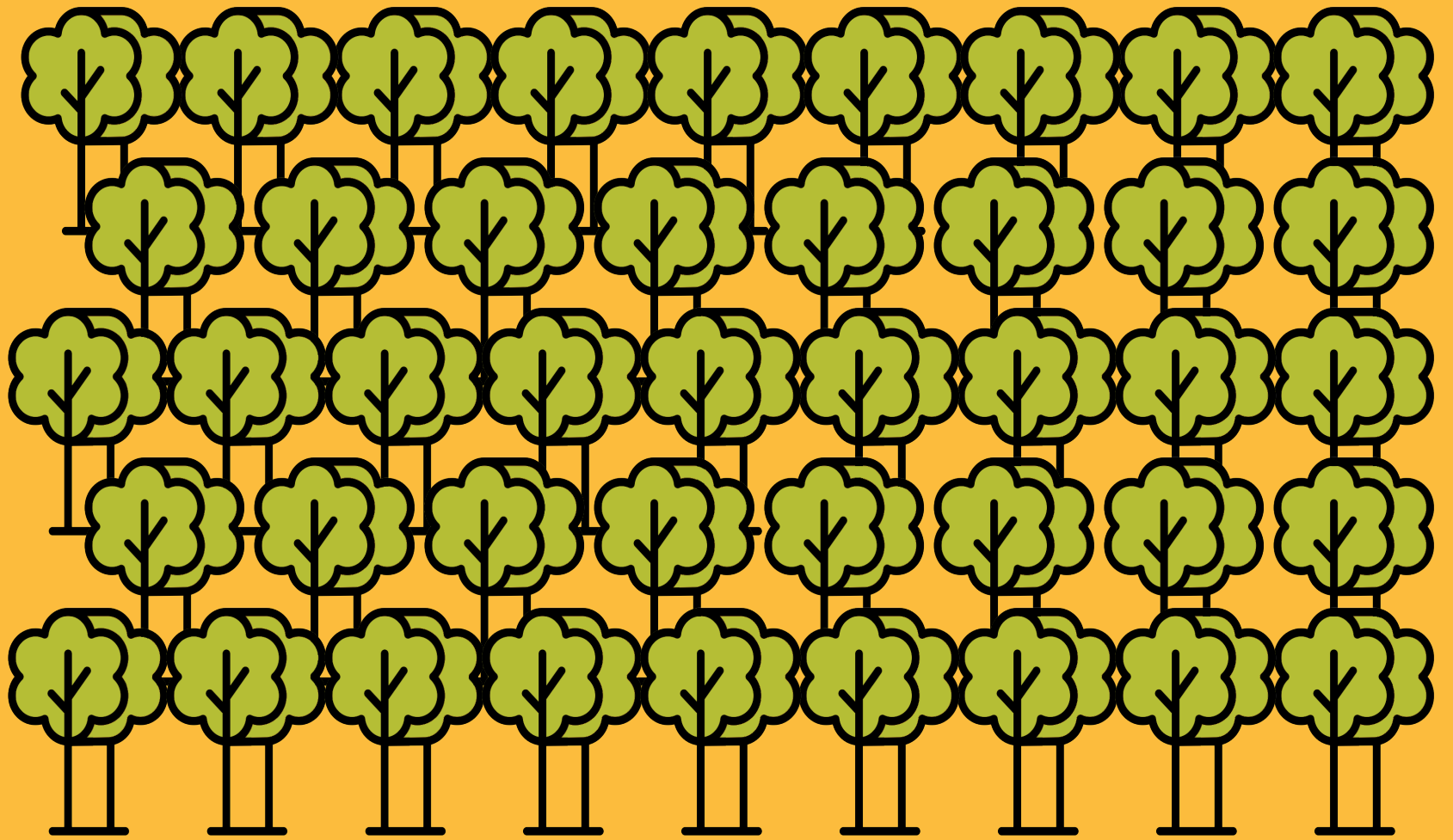
2. Is reusable mug or bottle use important? Why or why not?

- Use this question to assess your colleagues' attitudes towards reusable mug or bottle use. Knowing whether and why they care about this issue will help you target your education and outreach messaging to fit your audience.
- If your colleagues aren't sure why it's important to use a reusable water bottle, sharing information about the environmental impact of plastic waste would be a good way to build sustainability literacy.

3. Which of the following factors influence how often you use your reusable mug or bottle?

- Use this question to assess your colleagues' motivations and priorities. Knowing their reasons for using a reusable mug or bottle can help you maximize the impact of your sustainability initiatives.
- If convenience is very important to your colleagues, investing in shared dishware for office use might make using a reusable mug a more convenient choice.
 - a. **Convenience**
 - b. **Saving money**
 - c. **Minimizing plastic and paper waste to protect the environment**
 - d. **Beverage quality**
 - e. **Other** (please describe)

Appendix D: Paper Waste Reduction



200 Trees

That's how many trees UCalgary saves each year by printing two-thirds of our documents double-sided.

With all of the University of Calgary's central printers printing only two-thirds of all documents double-sided, we save over two million pages each year – that's around 200 trees.

Avoid printing when possible

Print double-sided as often as you can

Reuse old single-sided printouts as scrap paper

You'll save paper, trees – and money, too!