



*Green  
Gator*

**SF STATE**

# OFFICE GUIDE

By the Office  
of Sustainability







# Acknowledgements

1

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While alligators aren't all green, they know how to take care of themselves with limited resources. This is made for SF State employees (whether remote or on campus) to learn and apply environmentally conscious decisions in the workplace.

Hence, living *green*!





# Why be a Greener Gator?

By now you are probably aware that caring for the health of our community takes constant work, and while sometimes it can be tedious, our efforts ensure that we have a place to live comfortably. We're not talking about your houses or rooms, but the planet as a shared home.

Given that the actions of our predecessors, together with our actions, have made our future precarious, this guide was made for faculty, staff, and anyone with an office space with tips and quick switches to be more environmentally conscious. The more attention you pay to what you consume and do every day, the less tedious it becomes.

In San Francisco, California, living more sustainably is not an inconvenience if you know where to go and how to process our daily living impact on the planet. Even as a remote employee or student assistant, you can still apply this guide to your office space.

Because it is us and the future generations who will face the consequences of yesterday's choices, but today's decisions can help slow down those consequences. It can start at our desks.



# Considerations

**Sustainable swaps** have the main goal: REDUCE waste, especially landfill. However, you are recommended to work within your means, from your own work space to the whole workplace. Work space is where you have the most control at your own productive environment, like your home office. Workplace is where you are present in the shared space with peers, teams, and so on. Not everyone can afford to go 100% overnight. If you already own disposable items, you can wait until those items have finished its use to replace them. This section will include dining item swaps in event planning.

**New Gator Habits** are action items for your office, especially when it comes to printing and working on the computer. Keep in mind that it takes time to implement these habits for yourself and for your workplace. When making these changes, be mindful and maintain respect in the office.

**Peer activism** can be about bringing a memorable reusable item as a gift for your team member. It could be creating a save-energy pledge campaign for your department or create an Earth Week competition between offices. Your influence can start at a small step.



# Table of Contents

## + SUSTAINABLE SWAPS

Pages 5-12

- Event Setup/Cleanup
- Break Room/Kitchen
- Odor
- Soap
- Desk/Office
- Glitter is Litter

## + NEW GATOR HABITS

Pages 13-19

- Lower Carbon Footprint
- Active Transport
- Proper Waste Disposal
- Energy Conservation
- Upcycling

## + PEER ACTIVISM

Pages 20-22

- Peer Influence
- Pledge Campaigns
- One-Paged Flyer

## + SUSTAINABLE SWAPS

5

### Event Setup/Cleanup

In the workplace, celebrations are held to show appreciation towards one's accomplishments, to welcome or bid farewell, and so on. This involves plans for food catering and disposable supplies.

Disposable items doesn't always mean it goes to landfill. Soiled paper, plants, and food scraps are accepted for compost in San Francisco, CA, by Recology.

For food catering, we suggest the following compostable dining items:

- BPI-certified bags
- Compostable-labeled or wooden utensils
- paper napkins, bags, plates
- paper take-out boxes and containers
- wooden coffee stirrers and toothpicks.

Another reason to use the alternatives is for your health. Heating with plastic food containers can release harmful chemicals into your food and, in turn, to your body.



# Event Setup/Cleanup

Attendees can also be encouraged to bring their reusable travel mugs and food containers. This helps make the cleanup more easier with less waste.

Bamboo utensils are becoming popular when avoiding plastic utensils at events and restaurants. The utensils are also sold in travel sets, easy to pack in the bag.

Coordinate with the dining services team over the event planning. If they are constantly replacing the hot water and coffee pitchers, tell them when the last replacement should be to avoid waste. This is important when attendees are starting to leave the event early or the rush hour has passed.

After the event is over, use cleaning products that are gentle to the hands. The important ingredients are baking soda, vinegar, and lemon juice.

Use reusable cleaning gloves instead of disposable gloves.

When hosting events in San Francisco, California, refer to the Recology's "What Goes Where" waste guide. In general, you can refer to the local county's waste management facility for their waste guide.

<https://www.recology.com/recology-san-francisco/what-goes-where/>





# Break Room/Kitchen

Modern life keeps us at high speeds and eating on the go can be detrimental to our environment, so saving prepped meals or left overs is the best way to not only save money but prevent food waste and reduce your carbon impact. We all know by now that microplastics and related chemicals are becoming an increasing danger to human health, so what kind of reusable containers can we rely on to help us be more environmentally responsible?

It turns out that **silicone**, a “man-made polymer created from silicon,” the natural element found in sand, is more resistant to high temperatures and UV, so it does not react with chemicals or release them, it is made only of silicon, oxygen and other elements (usually carbon and hydrogen). It does not break down into micro particles like plastic does. There are some downsides to silicone as produced currently, one is that the raw material is sand.

**Pick platinum cured silicone**, aka **medical or food grade silicone** to avoid certain silicone from entering your food when cooking.

Even if it's not your home kitchen, the suggestions can be applied to the meal you bring and the break room if it follows your employer's protocols.



# Break Room/Kitchen



To reduce our paper and plastic waste, here are some swaps:

- compostable hemp coffee filter
- cotton produce bags
- metal mesh coffee filter
- silicone food cover
- resealable silicone bags



For cotton items that hold produce, be sure to wash the cotton bags regularly and avoid moisture to keep your produce fresh.

For dishwashing, you can find similar materials for the bathroom swaps for dish sponges and soaps:

- bamboo dish brush
- coconut noir dish scrubber
- copper dish scrubber
- dish soap bar
- mayan loofah dish sponge



Note, the loofah dish sponge may look thin at first, but it expands after the first use!

For those who look for vegan products in the stores, look for produce in compostable film instead of plastic film. **8**



# Odor

Air fresheners often come in aerosol cans, refillable concentrates in plastic bottles, or other disposable packaging. To treat the odors, use room deodorants that can break down odor molecules.

Potpourri is a mixture of dried petals and spices. It can be placed in a bowl that adds a decorative touch in the bathroom.

The goal is to lower risk of exposure from harmful chemicals in air fresheners. Some can trigger asthma, headaches, and more!



# Soap

Many markets are now selling package free soap bars for shower use, such as shampoo bars, handsoaps, and lotion bars.

Sometimes, we have to wait longer for the hand soap to be refilled in our office bathrooms. In the meantime, you can purchase hand soap sleeves. It is also convenient when you're traveling.

Along with soap, finding the perfect loofah can be tricky. Avoid nylon as nylon is not compostable.

Buy mayan loofah or brushes but avoid the ones with 10% nylon.



# Desk/Office

For your office, you can make the consumer choice to be environmentally-friendly with the following suggestions:

- 100% post-consumer recycled chair mats
- 100% recycled notebook
- 100% recycled printing paper
- 95% recycled pens
- Refillable pens



Standard wooden pencil shavings (with no plastic wrap) are compostable.

Check the coffee and water stations. If they have disposable cups, bring your own mug to reduce waste.

Are your notes always temporary?  
Try out the following swaps:

- Reusable whiteboard notebook
- Reusable sticky notes

Don't have a budget for office items?  
You can practice Upcycling by crafting disposable items with a new purpose.



# Desk/Office

To freshen the air at your desk, use plants or local flowers if applicable. If you want a bit of fragrance, then potpourri is recommended.

Corks are from the bark of the cork oak. Natural corks are compostable, but be careful of synthetic or plastic that looks like cork.

Cork can also be recycled into coasters, cup sleeves, mousepads, planters, and more!



Using these to decorate your desk help save post-consumption cork.





# Glitter is Litter



Plastic microbeads and metallic confettis are harmful to our water and difficult to keep the space clean. Especially with microplastics on the rise, we have to acknowledge that glitter is litter.

For an event worth celebrating with confetti, the alternatives can still bring joy and color.

You can create or join a "Glitter is Litter" campaign and share how you are using other alternatives. Here are some swaps!

- flower petals (dried or fresh)
- leaves
- seeds
- bubbles



## + **NEW GATOR HABITS**

### **Lower Carbon Footprint**

**Reducing animal agriculture consumption** and **supporting local businesses** can reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) and contribute to our health. You don't have to be 100% vegan.

As communication is also held online, create an online survey for dietary restrictions and an online flyer to save paper. Same method can be done with potluck signups. QR codes can be used to access online flyers just by using the smartphone camera! This helps lower the amount of paper printed on a daily basis.

When ordering food and drinks, purchase in bulk to save money. Aim for food with less packaging, especially avoid plastic wrap and styrofoam.

To lower the carbon emissions from delivery, find catering services from nearby businesses.

During an intense political climate, you can protest against injustice by **limiting your spending**. Especially since large businesses are mixed with politics, you have the power NOT to spend and that makes a big difference.



14

# Active Transport

Use **public active transport** if accessible. In the Bay Area, the month of May holds the annual Bike to Work day.

When planning for business trips, try to **avoid flights** or lower the CO2 offsets with public transportation. There are “donations” you can make to an airline who has partnered with a carbon offset company like **carbonfund.org** to fund energy efficiency, forestry, and renewable energy projects.

When driving is your only option, see if a carpool plan can be arranged between the peers you can trust.

Check out initiatives offered to SF State employees like the Commuter Check program!

A custom Google map called "Sustainable SF State" marks the charging stations and ZipCar. Created by the Office of Sustainability.

Scan the QR code for easier access! The map is always updating for each feedback, so comments and questions are appreciated!



# Proper Waste Disposal

Lowering the amount of waste also helps lower the amount of energy put in waste management and carbon emissions. This means to properly sort our disposals to the correct bins: recycling, compost, and landfill.

Materials that do not belong in the main three bins must be properly disposed to other locations. More information is available in the next page.

Having one large set of waste bins in the break room or lobby reduces the amount of workload and increases efficiency for waste management staff.

Plus, you get to take a break from your desk!





# Proper Waste Disposal

Contact the Environment, Health & Safety (EHS) office to drop off certain e-waste or materials.

The EHS office has the guidelines for the following:

- batteries (visit website below for more details),
- old campus electronics (not personal e-waste),
- and hazardous waste (cleaning supplies, automotive parts, oils, and paint).

Work Control in Facilities collects the following:

- keys made on campus,
- box(es) full of compact fluorescent light bulbs,
- refrigerators and freezers,
- scrap metal,
- and large amounts of wood.

Printer ink toner cartridges can be recycled in the Xerox Eco Box in the SF State's print program. Located at the library bottom floor. Any type of toner is accepted.



<https://sustain.sfsu.edu/recycling-compost-waste>

# Proper Waste Disposal

Do **not** shred confidential documents! It cannot be recycled easily and generally not a secure method.

Instead, contact your department for a specific container from CityWide Fibers.



<https://sustain.sfsu.edu/secure-paper-shredding-and-recycling>

The Grounds Staff accepts yard waste as green waste. Then Recology collects it as part of their composting program. However, if the amount is large or needs special arrangements, then contact Facilities or submit a service request at [facilities.sfsu.edu](https://sustain.sfsu.edu/facilities).

<https://sustain.sfsu.edu/recycling-compost-waste>



# Energy Conservation

Another aspect of sustainability is choosing the right appliances, as well as being conscious of its energy consumption and our habits to reduce energy waste. We want to make sure that we are all saving both energy and money when working in the office or at home.

When not in use, turn off and disconnect your devices. How come?



Beware of phantom electricity load, also called energy vampires. It is an event when electricity is still being used on sleeping or turned off appliances that are plugged in. To combat this, use the power strip and turn off the power strip manually after work.

The following are recommendations to save energy in your office.



**Power strip** that turns off during heavy electric power traffic times.

Washing your hands with **cold water** and soap.

**Natural lighting** in the morning and **LED light bulbs** later in the day.



# Upcycling

**Upcycling** helps you practice your creativity and create a new purpose for disposable items. If there are plans to make a social event on crafts, this is one of the ideas to implement. Some of the items can decorate your desk or break room!

Here are some examples:

**Milk cartons** can turn into bird feeders.

**Old large T-shirts** into tote bags (sew-free tutorials)!

**Tin cans** into pencil holders or flower vases.

**Gift cards** cut into the shape of guitar picks.

This can be a great activity during the month of April for Earth Day.







## + PEER ACTIVISM

### Peer Influence

The most impactful source is peer-to-peer influence. Whether it's from co-workers or trusted peers, we take their information more seriously. However, education starts with exposure, not force. Be mindful and respectful when informing your peers on how to be environmentally-conscious.

### Pledge Campaigns

If you work at home or in-person, you can make pledge campaigns! The campaign topic is of your choice, whether it's conserving water or saving energy. You can create an online sign-up sheet and create a virtual badge for those who sign up.

For those who work remotely, you can still sign up for a pledge as long as you are following the topic at home. There are mobile apps and online surveys to create or find online. For more flair, you can create a friendly competition between offices by comparing campaign results.

# One-Page Flyer

While the Green Gator Office Guide tailors to the workplace, the next page holds the "Living Green Like a Gator Guide."

The one-paged flyer holds easier practices to implement on the day-to-day basis. You can hang it on the fridge or in a shared space for everyone to read and see!

The Office of Sustainability appreciates your time reading the "Green Gator Office Guide" and your efforts to implement these practices. Feedback and questions are highly encouraged as we are all learning how to be a **green gator**.



# Living Green like a Gator Guide



Recycle loose,  
clean items



Turn off after  
computer use



Compost plants  
and food scraps



Fresh air  
with plants



Turn off  
the tap



Visit Mashouf  
Wellness Center



Dine with  
reusables



Upgrade bulb,  
lights off



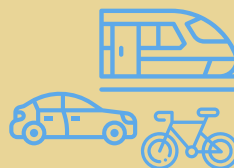
Laundry with  
cold water



Shop local in  
Farmer Markets



Air dry  
your clothes



Active transport  
and carpooling



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