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HOME & GARDEN

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THE GOODS

CHECK IT OFF

Recycle, reuse, renew

San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, Palo Alto, the counties of Santa Cruz, Marin and Sonoma — as cities throughout the Bay Area join the Zero Waste movement, eco-conscious residents are looking for organizing ideas that can help divert even more trash away from the landfill and back to good use. Here are some.

Degrease: When you're done with your used cooking oil or bacon fat don't chuck it down the drain. Not only does it cause a headache in the city's pipelines, nowadays, it can be reused for biofuel. Keep used vegetable oils in one container and animal fats in another and then drop them off. Visit sfgreasecycle.org for more information on where to drop it off.

Post the rules: Bay Area waste management facilities have recently added even more stuff to the list of what can go into your recycle bin, including plastic toys and that pesky hard plastic packaging. To help remind yourself what's in and what's not, check out the handy chart from SF Environment (links.sfgate.com/ZGCZ) or sfrecycling.com (links.sfgate.com/ZGDB). But the rules are different for each city and even vary in San Francisco, so check for details for your neighborhood.

Repurpose reusable grocery bags: Use paper bags to hold items like used CDs/DVDs, batteries, wine corks and clean plastic bags — like the ones newspapers are delivered in. You can drop those off at Whole Foods, or at most hardware stores when you're out shopping.

Look it up: How many times have you stood in front of the garbage can wondering, "Should I recycle this?" Don't give in and send it to a landfill. From broken appliances to Styrofoam peanuts, chances are it can be recycled or reused. Bookmark the [EcofindRRR](http://EcofindRRR.org) on sfenvironment.org to get tips on how to dispose of practically anything.



Get rid of old electronics safely: That Walkman from 1995, broken monitors, power cables that don't seem to go with anything, the free printer you got eight years ago with your laptop — the pile of e-waste from our electronic age seems to grow every week in our closets. You can't just toss it in the garbage, but now you can get rid of it responsibly at the E-Waste Recycling Day in Alameda from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at 3195 Mecartney Road. Visit noewaste.com and click on events or call (866) 335-3373 for more information.

Organize your recycling: The Mode Compact recycling organizer is just 15 by 17 inches, but it holds two weeks' worth of newspapers, as well as bottles and plastic containers. The mechanical crusher on top lets you pack even more cans and plastic bottles into the 8-gallon bin, and it boasts a filter system to help control odors. Available at Williams-Sonoma stores and online from Frontgate.com and Amazon.com (\$279-\$299).



Get a green cart: Potato peels, lobster shells, chicken bones, coffee grounds, even paper napkins and greasy pizza boxes. Once upon a time, those things went into the garbage, but now through urban compost programs, residents in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley and other cities in Alameda, San Mateo and Contra Costa counties can chuck their food scraps into a green cart to be turned into black gold and returned to the soil of Bay Area farms. Apartment renters, ask your landlord to get a green cart for the whole building, and they'll even give you individual kitchen pails for each apartment and instructions on what to compost. Contact your city's public works department for more information.

