

Green party checklist

With all the food, packaging, decorations and giveaways, celebrations of any size – from small gatherings to large parties – can generate a lot of waste. With a little bit of planning, you can make your next party low- or no-waste. The following checklist will help green your efforts before, during and after your party.

Hennepin County can help event coordinators for larger parties develop waste-reduction plans, educate vendors, train volunteers and find collection options. Learn more at hennepin.us/eventrecycling.

Before the party

Planning:

- Evaluate all materials that will be at the party (packaging, decorations, banners, dishware), and try to eliminate as many disposable materials as possible.
- Assess the waste that will be generated to identify recycling and/or composting opportunities. If food waste makes up a significant portion of the waste generated, consider collecting food waste for composting.
- Plan to serve food items that have little or no packaging.
- Make sure to use reusable, compostable or recyclable dishware.
- Have a disposal method for your dishware (organics recycling for compostable ware, recycling for recyclable etc.)
- Use large beverage containers or jugs to fill reusable or compostable cups to avoid single-use water bottles or beverage containers.
- Choose reusable linens, centerpieces, decorations, etc.
- Use decorations that can be reused in future years or consider borrowing decorations from a friend that has thrown a similar party. Consider using alternatives to balloons, such as fresh-cut flowers from your garden.
- If you are making your own food, consider using local food, such as from a farmers market or your own backyard garden. Many local farmers can provide local food items in the wintertime. If food for your party is being catered, talk to your catering company about how they can incorporate local food into the menu.
- Provide condiments in bulk instead of individually wrapped servings. For example, a squeeze container of ketchup, instead of individual packets.

Communication and education:

- Provide information on bike and transit routes to your party, or encourage your guests to carpool when possible.
- Consider distributing invitations electronically to reduce paper waste. If you prefer paper invitations, purchase invitations made from a minimum of 30% post-consumer content recycled paper.

Waste stations:

- Plan to place recycling, composting and trash receptacles together to form a waste station. This will help ensure that materials end up in the correct container.
- Make sure you have access to recycling, composting and trash containers prior to your party. Hennepin County also offers free portable recycling containers to reserve..
- Make sure waste stations are placed in a convenient location.
- Label all containers with large, clear and specific signs. If possible, include pictures or post examples of what goes in each container. Hennepin County offers free signs for recycling containers. Be sure signs on the waste containers are visible.

At the party:

- Empty bins often, especially during the summer when odors and/or insects can discourage recycling.