



# Zero-Waste Event Training Workshop

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For UVA Faculty & Staff



# What Is Zero-Waste?

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Minimizing landfill-bound waste from an event through recycling and composting

- We call an event “zero waste” if it keeps at least 90% of materials out of landfills
- Usually, food is a big part of event waste, so composting is critical for reaching that 90+% rate



# How Composting Works at UVA

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We work with a local company called Black Bear Composting so that our food scraps and other compostables can be turned into valuable, nutrient-rich soil (as opposed to being buried at a landfill, not fully degrading or adding value)

# Items we can compost

## FOOD SCRAPS AND LEFTOVERS

Meat, fish, dairy, fruit, vegetables, shells, bones, pasta, rice, eggshells, nutshells, bread, grains



## FOOD-SOILED PAPER

Coffee grounds and filters, tea bags, waxed cardboard, soiled paper bags, kitchen paper towels, paper napkins, paper egg cartons, uncoated paper plates (Absolutely no plastic)



## PLANTS, FLOWERS AND APPROVED COMPOSTABLE PACKAGING\*

Plants and flowers, landscape vegetation, holiday trees, untreated wood scraps



\*Look for this logo on your food service items and packaging!



# Biggest Challenge - Contamination

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**Contamination** is when non-compostable items end up in the compost bin

It is critically important to know what is compostable, because ANY contamination could make an entire bin destined for the landfill. So... “When in Doubt, Throw it Out”

- Beware things that look like paper but may have some sort of plastic coating, like most drink cups
- Beware labels “biodegradable” & “made from plants”
- Look for labels “compostable” and/or #7 PLA instead



The most successful zero waste events focus on providing ONLY things that can be composted, so that the likelihood of contamination is minimized



# Questions About Composting?

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Before we move on...





# Key Elements of Zero-Waste Events

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- 1) Compostable Wares
- 2) Bins & Bags
- 3) Signs
- 4) Helpers

The following slides walk through the process for hosting a zero waste event. At this time we can support events that are:

- On-Grounds
- Food-centric (not recommended for events where tabling swag or other materials could make up a large portion of the waste)
- Buffet style food service (not recommended for bagged or boxed meals with lots of packaging / individual containers)

# 1) Compostable Wares

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Some caterers can easily bring compostable wares if you just ask:

- UVA Catering (AKA Virginia Catering Company)
- Harvest Moon Catering
- Roots
- Pearl Island
- Vu Noodles

Tell them you are having a zero waste event and confirm that they can bring ALL compostable eco-products

Other caterers are not as good. You can always ask for eco-products, but even if they say yes, it is smart to BYO compostable items just in case

- If it's a small event or meeting (<50 people) and your budget is really tight, you can pick up from UVA Recycling
- If it's a larger event (50+ people), stock up on your own materials from Amazon

When you BYO, specifically tell the caterers you don't need any plates/cups/utensils from them (otherwise you'll be stuck with those extras as waste)



# Stock your own compostables from Amazon

For larger events (50+ people)



Eco-Products EP-P013  
Renewable & Compostable  
Sugarcane Plates, 9-inch  
Dinner Plate



Eco-Products World  
Art Renewable &  
Compostable Hot  
Cups, 12 oz



Eco-Products -  
Renewable &  
Compostable Fork -  
6 inch Plastic Fork

OTHER PRODUCTS  
INCLUDE:

- Spoons
- Knives
- Utensil packs
- Smaller plates
- Compartment plates
- Bowls
- Clamshells
- Cup lids
- Clear cups\*

\*not recommended because  
everyone always thinks they go in  
the recycle bin

## 2) BINS & BAGS

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TIP: A zero-waste station has 3 bins (compost, recycling, & landfill) even if you don't expect to have any trash/recyclables

### SMALL EVENTS/MEETINGS (>50 PEOPLE)

\*\*Must set up regular pickup of an outdoor compost tote\*\*

1. BYO compostable bags ([from UVA Sustainability](#) or [Amazon](#))
2. Convert an existing bin to a compost bin with the new bag
3. Pair next to recycle & landfill bins to create a full “zero-waste station”
4. After event, bring bag to outdoor tote for final pick-up

### LARGER EVENTS (50+ PEOPLE)

At least a week in advance, arrange for “zero-waste stations” with UVA Recycling (434-982-5050)

- Is your event indoor or outdoor? If indoor, check existing infrastructure for recycling and trash. Outdoor? Arrange for all three.
  - Recycling will pick up all bins for final disposal
- For extra-large events, UVA Recycling may ask you to arrange compost directly with Black Bear

# 3) SIGNS

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## SMALL EVENTS/MEETINGS (<50 PEOPLE)

For small zero-waste events where all materials are compostable, signs could be pretty basic:

- **Print something** simple that lists which items belong in each bin
- Put bins in front of a **white board** & write relevant items above each bin
- Or in a pinch, make an **announcement** to all attendees about what goes where

## LARGER EVENTS (50+ PEOPLE)

Comprehensive signage is absolutely necessary to help people understand at a glance

Hang **posterboards** and stick **actual example wares** on to demonstrate exactly what goes where

For outdoor events, large zero-waste station banners are available by request from the Office for Sustainability ([sustainability@virginia.edu](mailto:sustainability@virginia.edu))



SMALL



MEDIUM



LARGE

# 4) HELPERS - Last defense against contamination!

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## SMALL EVENTS/MEETINGS (<50 PEOPLE)

For small events, may only need one zero-waste “captain” to help things go smoothly

Do attendees have experience with zero-waste?

If not, captain should stand by the bins as people are leaving

Captain may need to make sure compost bag gets to the centralized bin for pick-up

## LARGER EVENTS (50+ PEOPLE)

Well-trained helpers can proactively guide attendees to the correct bins for different items

There should be helpers at each zero-waste station during any times when people are coming and going

Know your materials: the wider the mix of materials, the harder the job for helpers

# Other Suggestions

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Handheld food like pizza and sandwiches minimize the need for utensils at all

Buy/request things in bulk instead of individually wrapped! You'll save \$\$ and packaging

Pour drinks from large containers to cups rather than buying individual bottles/cans

Consider hosting bring-your-own mug coffee events and potlucks.

Return leftover wares to UVA Recycling or stockpile extras from a catering company

Tell attendees to bring tupperware and provide a few clamshells for any leftover food

Scrape out leftover food from serving bowls/platters and recycle those when possible

# Personal Recycling & Composting Resources

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- Visit the McIntire Recycling Center
  - 611 McIntire Rd, Charlottesville, VA, 22902
  - Hours: Closed Tuesday, all other days 8:30 am to 5:30 pm
  - Phone: 434-977-2976
  - <https://www.rivanna.org/mcintire-recycling-center/>
  - Accepts all kinds of recycling and composting
- City Residents: Join the Residential Compost Pilot Program
  - <http://www.charlottesville.org/departments-and-services/departments-a-g/city-council/a-green-city-/composting-in-charlottesville>
- Try Backyard or Worm Bin Composting
  - <https://www.charlottesville.gov/704/Backyard-Composting>
  - [Book: Worms Eat My Garbage](#)



# Thank you for your commitment to zero-waste!

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Please complete this quick Google Survey on your computer or phone so we can track all those who have been trained to host zero-waste events:

[tinyurl.com/ZWeventsUVA](https://tinyurl.com/ZWeventsUVA)

Happy composting! :)



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*From the Grounds Up*