

Recycling fact sheet: Paper and cardboard

Paper and cardboard are made from wood fibres, a natural renewable resource that is both biodegradable and easily recyclable. Paper can be recycled up to eight times before becoming biodegradable waste.¹

Did you know?

- Every year Brisbane residents recycle approximately 49,000 tonnes of paper and cardboard saving more than 190,000 metres² of landfill space.
- Paper and cardboard are the most common recyclable materials mistakenly put in the waste bin in Brisbane.
- Australians use approximately 3.5 million tonnes of paper and cardboard each year, which is enough to fill 160,000 large semi-trailers.³
- A single one litre milk carton can be turned into five sheets of high quality office paper.³
- The pulp and paper industry is the world's fifth-largest industrial consumer of energy.⁴

Benefits of recycling

Some of the benefits of recycling paper and cardboard are listed below.

Recycling saves energy. 70% less energy is required to recycle paper compared with making it from raw materials.⁵

Recycling saves water. More water is used to produce a tonne of product than any other industry. Producing paper from recycled materials uses 99% less water than if produced from raw materials.⁶

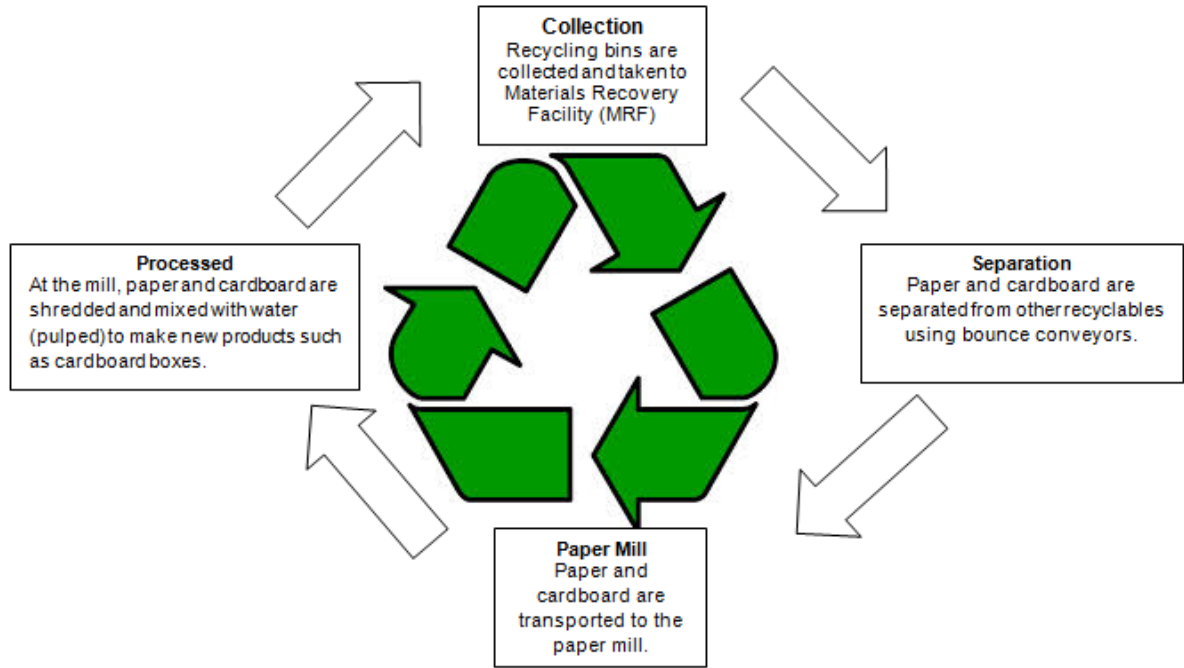
Recycling saves trees. It takes 24 trees to produce one tonne of high quality office paper.⁷

Recycling saves landfill space and resources. Every one tonne of paper and cardboard recycled saves 13 trees, 2.5 barrels of oil, 4,100 kWh of electricity, 4 cubic metres of landfill space, and 31,780 litres of water.⁸

Recycling reduces greenhouse gas emission. When paper and cardboard are wasted in landfill, they create methane, a major greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming.

How is paper and cardboard recycled?

Once the contents of your recycling bin is collected and taken to the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), the paper and cardboard is sorted from the rest of the material using bounce conveyors. The paper and cardboard is then taken to the paper mill, where it is shredded and mixed with water to create pulp, that can be used to make new products like cardboard boxes. The following diagram shows this cycle.



1 The cycle of paper and cardboard recycling

¹www.businessrecycling.com.au

²Visy *Brisbane City Council recycling report 2013-2014*

³www.conservatree.org

⁴www.sustainability.vic.gov.au

⁵www.epa.wa.gov.au/.pdf Recycling cost analysis and energy balance

⁶www.sita.com.au

⁷www.engineering.dartmouth.edu/Paper.pdf Forest and paper industry

⁸www.sd.fm.uwa.edu.au