



# Zero Waste Events How To Guide

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# Skidmore's Waste Goals

One of Skidmore's major sustainability goals is to reach a 60% waste diversion rate for college operations by 2025. As of the 2018/19 school year, that rate had increased from 27% to 36%. The college is improving, but not quickly enough to reach its current goals. A major step the college can take to reduce and divert its waste is to make events of all sizes zero waste.

## What is a Zero Waste Event?

Zero waste events are one's where 90% of the waste is diverted from landfills[1]. This is done by eliminating landfill-bound materials wherever possible and replacing them with reusable, compostable or recyclable one's. Any event can be turned into a Zero Waste Event by following the guide below. We also have a Zero Waste Intern that can be a great point of contact for all of your questions. Get in touch with them by contacting [sustainability@skidmore.edu](mailto:sustainability@skidmore.edu).



# Overview

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## Zero Waste Events

### Small Scale Events



We have a set of reusable silverware and plates that are available for pickup! Contact us for more details.

### Event Where Composting is Desired



We can drop off composting bins at your event. Find resources for compostable alternatives in the catering section below!

### Large Scale Events



For large events, contact our office and we will set up and provide staff to support the zero waste stations. Read the rest of the guide for more info!

## Email Us.

Thinking about holding a zero waste event? Your first step should be to email the Sustainability Office at [sustainability@skidmore.edu](mailto:sustainability@skidmore.edu) about your initial plans so we can work with you to develop your zero waste event.

# Planning Before an Event

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## Important Questions

### 1. Do you plan to have food at your event?

**Yes:** Great! This is super important to determine at the beginning of the planning process so you can keep zero waste in mind for all the planning to come. (Go to the next question)

**No:** While many of our zero waste goals relate to food waste, reducing other waste streams is super important too! The [“Alternative Materials” section](#) has a variety of ways you can replace traditional waste-generating materials for more sustainable ones.

### 2. Do you plan to have food at your event?

The number you expect to have in attendance is crucial when thinking about food and zero waste. If your event is on the smaller side, reusable wares can be an option, but if your event is larger, compostable wares will be the way to go. Read below for guidance on small versus large events.

#### Small Scale

Roughly 50 people or less in attendance is considered a small scale event

- Department/Office Meetings
- Club Meetings
- Other small events

\*\*Small events can be managed by event planners and do not require a Sustainability Office partnership, but you must contact us at [sustainability@skidmore.edu](mailto:sustainability@skidmore.edu) to get a compost bin or reusables.

#### Large Scale

Greater than 50 people in attendance is considered a large scale event

- Large Club Events
- Campus-wide Events (i.e. Founder's Day BBQ, Parent's Weekend Events, etc)

\*\*Large events require a Sustainability Office Partnership as we will need to staff the event to manage the waste streams properly. [Contact the office](#) immediately if you are planning on hosting a large scale event.

# Catering

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If you plan on having food at your event, you need to think about three general categories: Food, Wares, and Waste.

## Food

Where you get your food is super important! Depending on the size of your event, you could have full catering from an outside group or you can have a small potluck-style event. If you would like to have your event catered, below are some things to think about.

### Catering Locally

Try to utilize local business for catering and chat with them about using organic, local, and/or seasonal ingredients. It is also important to talk with them about using compostable wares and how to reduce waste (Look to Wares section for suggestions). Below are some local caterers!

- [Skidmore Dining Services](#)
- [9 Miles East](#)
- [Putnam Market](#)
- [Spring Street Deli](#)
- [Saratoga Broadway Deli](#)
- [Cardona's Market \(aka Roma's\)](#)

### Tips

- Ask your caterer what they offer in the order, particularly in relation to wares.
  - Communicate with your caterer about reducing packaging waste or use options that are reusable, recyclable, or compostable.
  - Make sure that they do NOT provide you with disposable cutlery sets.

## Wares

Wares include things like cups, utensils, plates, and to-go containers. Ideally, these items should be reusable to reduce any waste creation. However, at large events in particular, compostable wares should be used. Below is guidance for small and large scale events.

# Catering

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## Small Scale

- If you have a small scale event (~50 people), the Sustainability Office can offer a reusable wares kit (plates, utensils, etc). [Email the office](#) for more information.
- With smaller events, you can also encourage attendees to bring their own mugs, cups, plates, and so on.

## Large Scale

- Larger scale events will require compostable wares. Below are some companies that offer compostable wares. It is important to check with the Sustainability Office before purchasing.
  - [EcoProducts](#)
  - [Vegware](#)
  - [Amazon](#) (Try other retailers first, but sadly Amazon can be the most convenient)
- TIP: If you order catering from Dining Services, you can request compostable wares

## Waste Management

Making your event Zero Waste means that there will need to be waste stations, different from individual bins. At your event, you will need to have a compost bin, recycling bin, and landfill bin paired together at one waste station.

- Small scale event: Contact [sustainability@skidmore.edu](mailto:sustainability@skidmore.edu) to receive a compost bin. We will work with you to determine whether or not staffing is required.
- Large scale event: Sustainability Office staff will deliver and manage the waste stations at your event.



Sustainability Office Students staffing a Zero-Waste Station

# Catering

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## Things to Avoid



- Individual condiments
  - For sauces (like catsup or mustard), use large dispensers to eliminate the plastic packets
  - For things like butter, have a communal self-serve option or have the wrapping be compostable or recyclable
- Hot Liquid Containers
  - Be careful of coffee cups and soup bowls as they tend to be poly-lined and therefore must be put in the landfill bin (see the [“Wares”](#) section for more info)

For these items, try to find alternatives or remove them entirely



Landfill Bound: dirty recycling, plastic utensils, plastic bags, plastic film, plastic straws, hot coffee cups, food wrappers

## Food Waste

Before your event, it is crucial to think about how you will manage leftover food from an event. One way to do this is to donate the food to the local community for those in need.

- **Feedmore:** a student-run club on campus that collects leftover food from Dining Services and donates it to local food pantries and soup kitchens.
  - Contact: go to [Feedmore on SkidSync](#) for the current primary contact
- **Saratoga Free Fridge:** a local fridge and pantry that offers free food to the community
  - Contact: [saratogafreefridge@gmail.com](mailto:saratogafreefridge@gmail.com)



# Alternative Materials

Outside of food and wares, there are many other areas where you can continue to decrease the amount of landfill-bound waste your event is generating. Below are some specifics to think about.



## Plastic Water Bottles

- Canned Water: aluminum is more recyclable than plastic
- Water Refill Stations
  - Have water dispenser stations at your event where attendees can refill their own water bottle, reusable cup, or a compostable cup (look in "Wares" section)
  - Can request water dispensers (cambros) through Dining Services in EMS
- DO NOT get water in cartons, like JustWater as Casella, the Skidmore Waste Hauler, cannot recycle them and thus they are bound for the landfill



## Balloons

- Think about options that can be reused each year, especially when your event is recurring
  - Flags
  - Windssocks and Pinwheels
  - Paper rosettes
  - Reusable Balloons



## Name Tags

- Compostable name tag stickers
- Recyclable name tag stickers
- Lanyards
  - Reuse for multiple events and change the printed name insert

# Alternative Materials

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## Giveaways and Freebies

- Think outside the box and try to have giveaways that will last and have a function
  - Examples: reusable water bottles, reusable bags, gift cards
  - For t-shirts, get 100% cotton or organic cotton if possible
    - [TSG](#) is a local printing store
- Try purchasing giveaways from local businesses
  - [Northshire Bookstore](#)
  - [Uncommon Grounds](#)
  - [Mountainman Outdoor Supply Company](#)
  - [Saratoga Tea and Honey](#)



## Brochures

- Utilize QR codes to link to brochures, programs, and information booklets whenever possible to avoid mass-printing
  - Suggested Site: [QRCode Monkey](#)



## Table Cloths

- Avoid plastic tablecloths and invest in a cloth one that can be washed and reused
  - Stay away from white to avoid stains that will haunt you
  - [Webrestaurant Store](#)
    - Has a table cloth size calculator
  - [Target](#)

# Communication

Communicating to your attendees that your event will be zero waste is important. Before the day of your event it is crucial to communicate to possible attendees that your event will be zero waste and what that entails.

## Signage and Education

Below are some suggestions as to how to communicate your event is zero waste.

### Event Posters

When advertising for your event, state that a goal for the event is to minimize any environmental impact, which includes waste reduction. Below is an example.

- Link to a [Poster Template](#) with blurb and Zero Waste Logo

Here is an example of a blurb to put on your poster to convey that your event is zero waste!

Add a little blurb here about what other green activities you are doing!

Include this official Zero Waste Event logo on your poster!



# Communication

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## Event Emails

Emails allow for increased detail in communication about events and is the perfect opportunity to educate possible attendees on what zero waste is. Below are some possible blurbs to include when advertising for your event.

- “This event will be Zero Waste, meaning that our goal is to divert at least 90% of event waste from landfills ([UPenn Sustainability, 2014](#)). At this event, you will be asked to be conscious of your waste production and instructed on how to properly dispose of it to reduce your impact.”
- “This event will be a Zero Waste Event, meaning that our goal is to divert at least 90% of event waste from landfills ([UPenn Sustainability, 2014](#)). To do this, there will be a focus on compost and recycling at the event. Please be aware of all signs and instructions of how to dispose of your waste properly.”
- “In an effort to decrease our environmental impact, this event will be Zero Waste, meaning that our goal is to divert at least 90% of event waste from landfills ([UPenn Sustainability, 2014](#)). To do this, we will need your support and ask that while at the event, you are conscious of the waste you produce and how you dispose of it.”

## Signage for the Day of the Event

As mentioned, making sure attendees know that your event is zero waste is crucial to its success. At your event, bins should be well labeled and there should be other signage to communicate where waste stations are and what can be placed in each bin.

- If tables are present at your event, table-tents are a good way to convey details about zero waste
- Contact the Sustainability Office to borrow preexisting signs (listed below)
  - “Zero Waste Event” sandwich sign
  - “Zero Waste Event” feather flag (with stand for indoor, stake for outdoor)



# Day of the Event

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## Signage

Make sure your signage is visible!

- Have a sign at the entry way welcoming people to the Zero Waste Event. This sign should be large enough so that people don't miss it
  - Contact Sustainability Office to borrow large signs and flags
- Place table-tents or flyers on tables to communicate information about zero waste events

## Waste Stations and Placement

The strategic placement of waste stations is important for streamlined waste management.

- Stations should be located near high traffic exits to capture people leaving the event
- Locate stations near walls to make sure attendees cannot throw waste into the bins from behind, especially when waste station volunteers are present
- Compost bins will be dropped off at your event by the Sustainability Office



## Staffing

- When hosting a Zero Waste Event, there should be staff to manage the signage and waste stations at the event
  - These volunteers will communicate with attendees about how to properly dispose of their waste.
  - **NOTE:** there are different procedures for staff for small and large scale events. Look below.
- Make sure all volunteers are aware of the materials present at the event and which bins they belong in so they can assist attendees with any questions.
- Contact Sustainability Office for any questions about staffing or materials ("Waste Management" section)

# Day of the Event

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## Small Scale

- If you have a small scale event (~50 people) you should have at least one "point person" who will receive the compost bins and/or reusable wares from the Sustainability Office
- This individual will supervise the waste station (make sure bins are co-located) and signage at the event

## Large Scale

- For a large scale event where you have coordinated with the Sustainability Office, the Office can provide staff to patrol the waste stations and set up signage

## **Announcement**

At the beginning of your event, make an announcement to attendees that your event is a Zero Waste Event.

- Briefly describe the goals of the event and what attendees can do to make it a success
  - Sorting their waste and asking waste volunteers for assistance
  - Being conscious of their waste production
  - See "[Communication](#)" section for more suggestions

# After the Event

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It is important to follow-through with your Zero Waste Event. Below are some steps to take.

## Waste Calculations

- After the event, a Sustainability Office Student Worker will weigh each bin of waste generated
  - The amount of compost and recycling generated divided by the total weight of the waste to determine the diversion rate.
- Once calculated, the Sustainability Office will report the final diversion rate to you and your attendees and collaborators!
- Ask your attendees to take leftovers home with them and donate any that are left over.