

CAMPUS GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE LIVING





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WELCOME TO PURDUE!

Purdue University is a land-grant public university home to over 50,000 students in West Lafayette, IN. With a campus stretching over 2,500 acres, there are more than 160 buildings including over 30 residential buildings and 5 main dining halls. Ranked as a [Top 10 Most Innovative University](#), Purdue is known for its research, with over 400 research labs.

In 2025, Purdue was ranked the 12th most sustainable university in the US by the [Quacquarelli Symonds World University](#). Purdue was also ranked 5th among Big Ten universities. Many of Purdue's campus sustainability efforts are managed through [Administrative Operations](#) (AO), who supports the university's day-to-day operations and strategic vision for the future by providing safe, reliable, and transformative services. The AO [Sustainability Office](#), which facilitates initiatives and projects to extend sustainability efforts on campus, also executes AO Sustainability plans and goals.

Sustainability is also key to Purdue's research mission. With innovative research on how to overcome some of the world's most pressing environmental and sustainability challenges occurring across the entire campus, much of this work is coordinated through the Centers and Institutes at the Discovery Park District, Purdue's research hub. This is the home of Purdue's [Institute for a Sustainable Future \(ISF\)](#), which works to support research and partnerships that accelerate the transition to a more sustainable, resilient, and prosperous future. ISF is also home to the 2024-2025 [Campus Sustainability Working Group](#), which developed this guide in spring 2025.

Academically, Purdue has many sustainability-focused education opportunities for students to get involved in both inside and outside the classroom. There are degree programs and certificates as well as opportunities for research and many student clubs, organizations, and even a [Sustainability Committee](#) within the [Purdue Student Government](#). Throughout the year, there are numerous campus-wide events, like Green Week, which allow students to engage in sustainability efforts on campus. Stay connected with the latest events, opportunities, and student-led initiatives by following these groups on Instagram.



WHAT ARE YOUR SUSTAINABILITY HABITS?



GREEN NEWBIE

Just starting your sustainability journey? No worries! Learn the basics and take your first steps toward a greener lifestyle.



ECO EXPLORER

You know the fundamentals and are eager to do more. Time to explore new ways to reduce waste and conserve resources!



SUSTAINABLE SIDEKICK

You're consistently making eco-friendly choices and inspiring friends to join in. Keep up the good work!



PLANET PROTECTOR

You're committed to sustainability, from recycling right to reducing water use. Your actions are making a real impact!



ZERO-WASTE CHAMP

You go beyond the basics, aiming for minimal waste, mindful consumption, and smart sustainability hacks.



ECO-WARRIOR

The ultimate sustainability leader! You advocate for change, live by green principles, and inspire others to do the same.

No matter where you may be in your sustainability thoughts or efforts, we've got you covered on best practices on campus. Thanks for being involved!

BOILERMAKER CONTRIBUTIONS

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Every Boilermaker can contribute to the health and sustainability of Purdue's campuses, and this Sustainable Living Guide provides key resources and information for you to learn more about integrating sustainable practices into your daily life on campus and off.

SUSTAINABLE MOVE-IN



You've enrolled at Purdue! Among all the tasks and preparations for arrival, where you will be living might be one of the first concerns you have. As a new student, you are likely living in on-campus housing, but soon enough your living arrangements may include options such as an apartment, an off-campus house, a sorority or fraternity, or a cooperative house. Whether you are on or off campus, you can take steps to live more sustainably wherever you live or study.

GETTING PREPARED

When preparing for move-in day, there can be lots of items to purchase. Here are some tips to be a more sustainable shopper:

- 1 Purchase second hand items before your arrive, or once you get here!
- 2 Invest in reusable dishware and water-bottles instead of single-use plastic cups and utensils.
- 3 Coordinate with roommates on shared items you plan to bring. Increase your sustainability by considering rentals of fridges or microwaves. Purdue works with [Bedloft.com](https://www.bedloft.com) to provide rentals for students. Check with your housing office regarding guidelines and offerings!

DID YOU KNOW?

The [Purdue Surplus store](https://www.purdue-surplus.com) has pre-used items available for purchase both in store and online. This store sells items that are not in use by the university at a discount, keeping them from entering the landfill. Items sold include electronics, furniture, clothing, scientific materials and more. You can also check out local thrift stores around town.

MOVING IN

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME AT PURDUE!

Whether it's your first semester on campus or your first time in a new apartment or cooperative house (co-op), not all locations have the same policies and procedures when it comes to issues such as recycling, bike storage or policies regarding energy usage. During your move-in process, familiarize yourself with building practices and recycling locations.

Here's a list of key questions you can ask your Resident Assistant (RA), house manager or apartment management to learn more:

- 1 What items does the building collect for recycling?
- 2 Where are the closest recycling bins?
- 3 Are there any special initiatives related to sustainability that the building participates in?
- 4 Are there any water or energy conservation measures being taken?

PACKING TIPS

When packing your personal items for moving, be mindful of how you can reduce single-use waste.

- Use blankets, towels or clothing to pack fragile items instead of bubble wrap or packing peanuts.
- Pack your items within reusable bags or containers. These can be used again for future move-in and move-out.
- If you are using moving boxes, think about storing them to be used again!



LIVING SUSTAINABLY ON CAMPUS

To work towards a more sustainable campus, we can all contribute. Here are some simple actions that you can incorporate within your daily routine.

GETTING COFFEE TO GO?

Bring a reusable cup. Coffee shops around campus typically allow you to use your own cup. Ask when ordering!



WATER BOTTLES

Use that reusable water bottle! Packing your bottle own reduces the waste associated with single-use plastic bottles or cups. Water bottle refilling stations are located around campus in both academic and residential buildings. Keep an eye open while walking around to identify the closest refilling stations!



NEED A BAG?

Try to say no plastic bags when shopping and visiting retail locations around West Lafayette. Remember to bring your own reusable bags. Bring a container for food or leftovers. And remember, for [avoid heating food in plastic containers](#), glass is a better option.



BEST PRACTICES FOR STRAWS

Save the turtles! And our planet. Use reusable straws instead of plastic when dining at retail locations or [Dining Grab & Go](#).

Less is more! Purchase items with reduced packaging to help reduce unnecessary waste.

RECYCLING

“Recycling,” the process of collecting and processing materials that would otherwise be thrown away as trash and turning them into new products, typically diverting them from landfills, is a complex operation that takes into consideration local policies and capacities. Some recycling is dependent on the cost of collection and the current market for the materials being collected. In light of this, recycling can be a bit confusing and sometimes it is a good idea to keep items, particularly plastics, out of the recycling stream unless you know the guidelines. Otherwise, an entire bin of recycling can easily be contaminated.

Depending on where you live, locations may have different practices, procedures, and items accepted for recycling; talk to your RA or landlord to learn more about your building’s procedures. On the West Lafayette campus, landfill and recycling receptacles are located in both academic and residential buildings as well as in dining halls, the Purdue Memorial Union (PMU), and even at the France A. Córdoba Recreational Sports Center (Co-Rec). Look for these signs on bins to distinguish between landfill and recycling on campus.



RECYCLING BINS

Recycling Bins are typically blue and contain see-through liners. Here is some general guidance on what can typically be recycled. But remember, if you aren’t sure, don’t put items in these bins to reduce stream contamination. Remember, all containers must be empty and free of food debris.

- Plastics: Water and soda bottles, milk and water jugs, clean food and condiment bottles, detergent containers.
- Paper: newspapers, mail and magazines, office paper, notebook paper, paperboard
- Cardboard: shipping and moving boxes (flattened), milk and juice cartons
- Metals and Aluminum: metal (tin/steel) food cans, aluminum drink cans
- Glass Containers: bottles and jars

WHY ARE WE GIVEN SO MUCH PACKAGING AND PLASTIC ON CAMPUS?

While as individuals we can avoid extra packaging, many campus operations must also satisfy local to federal requirements for safe food handling. Supply chain issues and the availability of sufficient staffing may also contribute to what can be seen as ‘over’ packaging or a lack of reusable dining ware.

LANDFILL BINS

What can't be diverted or converted ends up in a landfill. Unfortunately, this means we all typically contribute to landfill waste every day. Here are some key contributors:

- Food Waste and Wrappers: all food, chip bags, soiled aluminum foil, greasy or soiled pizza boxes, greasy or soiled paper bags
- Single-Use Paper Products: napkins, paper towels, tissues, soiled paper plates, and disinfecting wipes
- Soft Plastics and Cutlery: grocery bags, plastic food storage bags, packing pillows, bubble wrap, food films and wraps, plastic forks, spoons and knives, plastic straws
- Food Containers and Cups: food containers, most hot liquid cups, packaging, plates

COMMON RECYCLING MYTHS

There are many misconceptions about recycling. Learn more about four of these myths:

- Everything with a recycling symbol is recyclable.
 - The ability to recycle certain items depends on your area's local collection procedures, the regional recycling infrastructure (i.e. Materials Recovery Facility), and the market value of the recycling commodity. Therefore, it is important to check recycling guidelines in your area.
- If you put something within the recycling bin, it will be recycled.
 - This practice is referred to as "wishcycling" or "wishful recycling." If unrecyclable items are included in a recycling bin, it can contaminate the recycling stream and lead to loads of recycling being sent to the landfill.
- Biodegradable or compostable plastics can go in recycling bins.
 - These items are meant to be composted. If put into the recycling stream, most will not properly break down. If there is not a composting option available, then these materials should be placed in the landfill bin.
- Pizza boxes are recyclable.
 - This depends on several factors. Before recycling a used box, especially ones with traces of food or grease, you should check with your area guidelines. If they don't accept pizza boxes with food contamination, then you can often cut the contaminated areas out and recycle the remaining cardboard.



FOOD WASTE DIVERSION

Food waste diversion, also known as organics recycling, diverts compostable materials from the landfill, thus reducing volume and waste. The city of [West Lafayette Water Resource Recovery Facility](#) currently, in 2025, takes food waste and processes it in their anaerobic digester to create electricity. If you plan to bring food waste to the facility, here's what you need to know:

Acceptable food waste items include:

- Bread, dairy, meat, fruits, vegetables, and processed food

What to leave home:

- Bones, utensils, packaging, wrappers, and yard waste (twigs, plants, and leaves)

PURDUE DINING

Purdue Dining and Culinary, with support of the Purdue Student Sustainability Council, as well as the Purdue Office of Engagement, participates in this food waste diversion process. Discarded food waste is taken to the same facility described above. They collect waste created during the preparation of food, as well as waste by diners. Some other residences, including some fraternities, sororities, and co-ops, also participate. Anyone can pick up countertop compost bins and drop off their own organics as well.

Trayless dining is the elimination of a plastic tray used by diners to carry their food. Do you know why Purdue Dining and Culinary uses trayless dining? When using trays, diners are more likely to get more food than they will eat, resulting in food waste. After every use, trays must be cleaned, which uses water and energy. This practice of trayless dining works to create less food, water, and energy waste.

DID YOU KNOW?



Many items can contaminate the recycling stream. Keep these items in mind:

- **Soft Plastics:** 'Zipped' storage bags, shopping/grocery bags, bubble wrap, shrink wrap, prepackaged food bags (think frozen vegetables) and cling films. Soft plastics can become caught within the Material Recovery Facility (MRF) sorting equipment causing shutdowns and risks for workers. These items must be recycled in specialized recycling bins, which are only available in limited areas and stores.
- **Single- Use Hot Beverage Cups:** Most of these cups have a coating to help insulate and waterproof the paper that makes them difficult to recycle. The Material Recovery Facilities in state do not have the capacity to process this material. You can, however, recycle single-use aluminum cups, and the cardboard sleeves for hot beverage cups.
- **Paper Towels, Tissues and Napkins:** The short fibers that make up the wood pulp in these products are difficult to recycle. To make new products, the fibers need to be longer. Additionally, the recycled material needs to be free of contaminants. Since these products collect contaminants such as liquids, grease and food, they cannot be recycled.

E-WASTE RECYCLING

Purdue's [environmental health and safety program](#) helps keeps people, particularly those working in research labs, safe. They have a waste pickup system to reach their safety and sustainability goals. They will typically pick up chemical waste, hazardous waste, e-Waste and universal waste (batteries, light bulbs, electronics, etc.) produced by the university. The university does not collect personal e-Waste through this program due to privacy concerns.

DID YOU KNOW?



- E-waste is electronic waste. This includes discarded physical electrical and electronic waste such as computers, batteries, appliances, cables, and phones.
- Improper disposal of e-waste can create toxic pollutants which can harm the environment and cause adverse health effects.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2022, only 22.3% of e-waste was properly recycled.

HOW DO WE RECYCLE E-WASTE?

Here are three ways you can recycle e-waste in Tippecanoe County:

- Where available, participate in trade-in programs when purchasing new electronics.
- Resell electronics that still work.
- Bring e-waste to a collection center.
 - Although Purdue does not collect personal e-Waste, student organizations sometimes facilitate collections throughout the year. Be on the lookout for these initiatives!
 - Some collection centers will visit West Lafayette throughout the year. [Green Wave Computer Recycling](#), as of 2025, hosts e-waste collection during the 2nd Saturday of each month at 2550 Northwestern Ave. To learn more about these events, [Tippecanoe County](#) posts information on their website.
 - Some locations, such as [Best Buy](#) and [Staples](#) may have e-Waste collection programs.

ENERGY AND WATER CONSUMPTION

Purdue's sustainability goals include reducing energy and water consumption. We all can contribute to meeting these goals. To help reduce energy and water consumption, identify areas in your daily routine that could result in reduced use of these resources.

Unnecessary energy and water use can be combatted through several easy actions that may already be part of your daily routine. It may be time to remind your roommates!

- Turn off lights when leaving a room.
- When possible, use cold or lukewarm water, especially when washing clothes. Many laundry detergents are now optimized for use in cooler temps.
- Keep heating and air conditioning temperatures between 68 (winter) and 76 degrees (summer). Set your thermostat at the lowest comfortable temperature in the winter and highest comfortable temperature in the summer.
- If you leave for an extended period of time, consider adjusting the thermostat to use less energy during that time
- When possible, use a smart or programmable thermostat, or ask your landlord to consider installing one.
- Keep air vents clear.
- Be mindful of your time in the shower.
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth or shaving.

DID YOU KNOW?



A common way that people use unnecessary energy is due to phantom loads. A phantom load, also known as a vampire load, is electricity that a device consumes even when turned off but still plugged in. Although these devices only use a small amount of electricity remaining plugged in, this energy adds up over time.

Common Items that may use energy even when you are not actively using them: any item with an LCD, light or clock, TVs, streaming devices like Roku™, game consoles, microwaves, computers and laptops, chargers, smart home devices like Alexa™ and Google Home™, printers, coffee makers.

Some ways to combat energy use include:

- Turn off your power strip with surge protector when not in use. Turning off the power strip with the surge protector is the equivalent of unplugging these devices from the wall.
- Unplug devices before leaving for the weekend or breaks.
- Completely power down devices when they are not in use instead of leaving them in standby mode.
- Charge devices and unplug them before going to bed.



SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

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There are a variety of options when commuting to campus and getting around West Lafayette. Common methods include public transportation, walking, biking, electric powered vehicles and driving.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Students have the option to use public bus transportation to get around campus, West Lafayette, and Lafayette. Purdue often partners with a public transportation provider to provide students with a no-cost option to get to campus. Be sure to check the [Purdue Parking website](#) for the latest details.

Purdue also operates the [Campus Connect](#) between West Lafayette and Indianapolis. In spring 2025, West Lafayette campus pick-up and drop-off locations included areas at the Purdue Memorial Union (PMU) and Stewart Center, and another in the circle drive in front of the France A. Cordova Recreational Sports Center (CoRec).

WALKING, BIKING, ELECTRIC OR MOTOR POWERED VEHICLE (EMPV)

These forms of transportation are the most eco-friendly. Purdue has created a robust system of walking and biking trails throughout campus and the surrounding areas to promote sustainable micro-mobility options while keeping both riders and pedestrians safe. Remember to abide by the [Rules of the Road](#) and posted speed limits when using a bike or EMPV.

In 2025, Purdue has a partnership with [Veo](#), a company that provides rentable electric scooters and bikes. Veo scooters and bikes are located throughout campus for use.

[Bike racks](#) are located outside of the entrances to many buildings on campus. Be sure to park your bike in the designated parking spots. Unproperly parked bicycles or EMPVs will be subject to removal. Not sure about parking rules? Check out the latest policies on the parking [website](#). Students are expected to follow all guidelines in housing and academic buildings when using EMPVs.

DRIVE

Many students, faculty and staff drive to campus daily. While most find places to park in available locations around campus, there are also options for more sustainable rides. Purdue has installed some [electric vehicle charging stations](#). However, cars parked in these spots must be charging or will be issued a citation. Two spaces are located within each parking garage on campus except for University Street Parking Garage which has three spaces. Other driving options include renting a car with [Zipcar](#) or carpooling.

SUSTAINABLE MOVE-OUT

LOOKING TOWARD THE END OF YOUR SEMESTER

Whether you are leaving for the summer, or ending your college career and leaving campus altogether, there are a lot of things to do! On campus, there is often a clear move-out process organized through the residence halls. From off-campus locations, moving out might look a bit less organized. Throughout those tasks and in the future, you can use some of the tips and resources provided in this guide make the move run smoothly and more sustainably.

TIPS FOR MOVING OUT OF RESIDENCE HALLS

When packing for move out, plan ahead to complete sustainable actions such as donating or recycling. Use these tips to guide your move-out process.

- Donate unwanted items to appropriate organizations such as local thrift stores or shelters.
- Store items over the summer instead of rebuying them next year. There are several storage companies in the area. Check with housing staff for resources. If you're looking for bike storage, more information can be found on the [Purdue University Bike and EMPV Storage](#) site.
- Properly dispose of waste. If you have specialized waste such as e-waste or single-use plastic bags, make plans to take items to collection centers before move out. Refer to the Recycling section.



Often residence halls organize [Project Move-Out](#), a University-sponsored event through which staff work with student and partner organizations to divert usable items from entering the landfill. Occurring during spring move-out, items collected include electronics, furniture, home appliances, clothing and other household items like bicycles. Participating residence halls have designated donation collection areas during the event. There is often additional guidance for efficiently disposing of unwanted items.

YOUR RESOURCES

CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

There are a variety of ways to get involved in promoting and learning about sustainability on campus. Learn more about how you can participate in these academic programs, student clubs and organizations, and campus-wide events to make a sustainable difference.

ACADEMICS

Students of all majors have the opportunity to learn more about sustainability. [Boilerlink](#) is a valuable resource to search using keywords Sustainable, Sustainability or Environment within to find a complete list of active clubs and student organizations that match your interests. Included below are a few areas and opportunities for professional programs relating to sustainability:

- [AO Student Sustainability Internships](#)
- [Purdue Student Farm](#): Part of coursework for Sustainable Food and Farming Systems majors. This student-managed farm uses sustainable farming methods.
- [Study Abroad Opportunities](#): To learn more about current sustainability-related trips, check out the Study Abroad website.
- [EPICS \(COE\)](#): An engineering program that creates solutions in partnership with community organizations. Check to see what current sustainability-related projects are occurring.
- [Environmental and Sustainability Studies](#): A certificate program through the College of Liberal Arts.
- [Sustainability Engineering and Environmental Engineering \(SEE\)](#): This school, the first of its kind to combine sustainability engineering and environmental engineering, aims to address the increasing industry demand for skilled professionals in these fields.

CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS

These are several campus organizations that focus on sustainability:

- [Purdue Solar Racing](#): A non-for-profit organization that creates and races cars powered by solar energy.
- [Purdue Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society](#): A student society with a focus on wildlife management and research.
- [Purdue Student Sustainability Council](#): A council working to bring awareness, action and sustainable change to Purdue's campus and the Greater Lafayette area.



CAMPUS WIDE EVENTS

Throughout the year, there are several events on campus that relate to sustainability and encourage sustainable practices. Events include [Green Week](#), [Spring Fest](#), [Earth Month](#) and more.

One campus favorite is the [Farmer's Market](#). During May through October, Purdue hosts a farmers' market on Memorial Mall featuring local farmers and small businesses.



THANKS FOR BEING INVOLVED!

Boilermakers are difference makers. Your efforts in eco-minded activities and sustainable practices are appreciated by your greater campus community. No matter where you are in your sustainability journey, your actions matter!

Thanks, Boilermaker!



CONTENT CONTRIBUTORS

This resource is an output of the [Campus Sustainability Working Group](#) (SWG) and the [Institute for a Sustainable Future](#) (ISF). It came to life through the efforts of students and staff collaborating to bring together the most up-to-date and relevant information about sustainability on Purdue's West Lafayette campus. Special thanks goes to ISF Communication Intern Cori Lollis for her help in creating this guide.



Thank you for your interest in making a difference at Purdue!
We hope you'll adopt these ideas in your everyday life.