

Paper Cuts: 6 Easy Ways to Opt Out of the Paper Avalanche



Futurists began predicting a paperless society sometime in the late 1970s, but nearly four decades later it seems we're still awash in paper products. While recycling can go a long way toward clearing your conscience about paper usage, an even better solution is to reduce the amount of paper that's actually entering your home.

Opting out of the traditional paper lifestyle can happen in several ways, and as technology continues evolving, we find new ways to cut the very things that we once thought we could never live without. Today, becoming paperless is easier than ever — but it also takes a conscious effort to make it happen. If you're looking for a way to climb out from under the paper mountain, try these options to begin reducing your pulp friction.



Phone books

Yellow page publishers now offer many online and mobile options to find local businesses. If you no longer want to receive a printed phone book, opting out offers some great green advantages. Creating and delivering a phone book requires energy, fuel, paper and other resources that can all be saved in advance. Just visit the National Yellow Pages [consumer choice opt-out site](#) and opt out of receiving them, or customize your delivery options so that you only get the books you want.



Bills and bank statements

Opting out of those monthly bills will make you feel better every time you open your mailbox. Of course, you still have to pay your bills — it's just nice not to see them sitting there when you grab your mail! Most companies today have a paperless option, whether it's for your utilities, car payment or credit cards. (The key to successfully opting out is to maintain good electronic records, because some companies are better than others at reminding you when your bill is due.) If you discover that you have trouble managing electronic statements, set up reminders on your computer's calendar so you'll pay your bills on time.

While we're talking about money, bank statements are another piece of paper that can easily go by the wayside. Since you're probably already using online banking, why not commit to completely paperless banking? Monthly statements are available online and can be saved on your computer as a PDF if you want easier access to your information

Newspapers, magazines and books

Those who love the written word have had a tough time converting, but e-readers and tablets have made this much easier. In addition to moving your library to a digital format, consider getting all your magazines and newspapers delivered digitally. You might be surprised at how much you enjoy it — most publications offer interactive features like videos, Web-only content and updates that the printed version cannot.



Coupons

Maybe the thing that's keeping you holding on to your Sunday newspaper subscriptions is your love of clipping coupons. Well, fret not — the cure for that coupon conundrum is as near as your smartphone. Certain chains, including Target, Kroger, Walgreens and CVS, offer mobile apps to help save money at the register. But there are also hundreds of apps that compile information from different stores to help you save money.

Whether they're filling you in on special deals, giving you bonus points to redeem at the store or providing manufacturer's coupons that can be redeemed anywhere, you no longer have to grab the scissors to cut your costs.



Transaction receipts

Eliminating paper receipts is a great way to cut waste. Many stores now offer the option of having your receipt emailed to you, and this little step can add up to big savings for the planet. The retail management software company [Celerant Technology Corp.](#) estimates that switching to digital receipts in the U.S. alone could save more than [9.5 million trees and save 1.2 billion gallons of water](#) used during the receipt-paper production process. So next time you're asked if you'd like that receipt printed, press "No, thanks!"

Notes & Notebooks

Note-taking has come a long way since you first sharpened up a No. 2 pencil and grabbed your Big Chief tablet. Digital notes are the ideal way to keep track of important information without clogging up your desk – and later the recycling bin – with pages and pages of notes. One of the advantages of taking notes digitally is that they are easier to organize, and you can carry them with you pretty much anywhere, thanks to your smart phone and tablet. One of the best note-taking tools out there is [Evernote](#), which lets you take notes from your computer, tablet or phone, then organize and store them in one place. Suddenly, paper notes seem so, well, cumbersome, and you will not leave home without it.



Junk Mail

One other irritating source of unwanted paper is, of course, junk mail. According to the Better Business Bureau, you can get a five-year reprieve from unwanted preapproved credit card offers by visiting [OptOutPrescreen.com](#), and end direct-mail solicitations by opting out at [DMAchoice.org](#).

Your recycling bin will thank you!

