# Audit Your Workplace's Paper Consumption in Two Steps



If you want to improve your company's impact on the environment, one obvious place to start is with the amount of paper it consumes. Despite all the talk about 'paperless' workplaces, few companies have been able to achieve that state. But you can do a lot to reduce the amount of paper your company uses.

By reducing the amount of paper used at your workplace, you're helping to preserve forests and natural habitats, reduce solid waste sent to landfill, conserve water, and reduce the use of harmful chemicals.

Paper reduction can also cut your paper purchasing costs. As your company uses less paper, you'll extend the useful life of your printers and copiers, and use them more efficiently, driving additional savings. Using less paper also means your office requires less storage, filing, shredding and waste disposal services.

The first step to reducing paper consumption is to conduct an audit of paper used for printing, copying and faxing. According to the World Wildlife Fund, a paper audit helps you determine the environmental impact of paper use at work by measuring two main focus areas:

- Quantity of papers
- Environmental attributes.

The main goals of a paper audit are to:

- Determine the annual quantity of paper used, both total and per employee
- Determine the proportion of paper used that meets specific environmental criteria, such as post-consumer recycled content and FSC or EcoLogo certification
- Help set paper use reduction targets and increase the proportion of paper that meets environmental criteria
- Enable you to report the quantity and environmental attributes of paper used.

The WWF guide provides a step-by-step process for conducting a paper audit at

your workplace:

**Step #1: Determine the Annual Quantity of Paper Used**

To measure the annual quantity of paper used at your office, simply determine the amount of paper that's purchased in one year. Office paper is typically purchased in packages called 'reams,' which is equivalent to 500 sheets of paper. The ream/package will indicate the number of sheets and paper density.

Once the number of reams purchased in a year is determined, the total and per employee quantity and weight can be calculated. The weight of a standard sized sheet of paper before it's cut into a finished size (like 11'x 17′) is called 'grammage' and is expressed in grams per square metre ('gsm' or 'g/m2').

**Step #2: Determine the Proportion of Paper with Environmental Attributes**

Measuring the proportion of paper used at your workplace that contains environmental attributes, such as post-consumer recycled content or FSC or EcoLogo certification, is also done by tracking all the paper that's purchased in one year.

Once you've determined how much paper your workplace uses and how much of it meets certain environmental criteria, you can set goals for reducing paper consumption. You may want to set short-term and long-term targets, such as:

- Reducing total paper consumption (kg/FTE) by 30%
- Increasing to 30% the proportion of paper purchased that contains at least 30% recycled content
- Increasing to 30% the proportion of paper purchased that meets sustainability criteria.

Some ways to reduce overall paper consumption include:

- Print and copy fewer documents
- Use automatic settings on computers to set the default print setting to be double-sided
- Print as PDF and file electronically
- Reduce the number of printers or photocopiers
- Instead of paper stubs, use electronic paystubs
- Issue electronic invoices
- Review and edit documents electronically using the 'Tracked Changes' function in your word processor rather than editing on hardcopy
- Collect and use documents that are blank on one side for drafts, notes and scrap paper
- Recycle all paper that *is* used and is no longer needed.