Before your event

During the initial planning stages of your event, outline sustainability goals and brainstorm ways in which they can be achieved. Think about how the size of your event might dictate the nature of your sustainable initiatives.

**Example Goal**: We hope to divert at least 85% of waste generated at our event from going to a landfill. We will have clear signage on compost, recycling and landfill bins and have event volunteers directing the flow of waste at each bin station.

**Example Goal**: At least half of our guests will bring their own water bottles and silverware.

- If a committee is planning your event, elect a sustainability point person to spearhead your sustainability efforts.

- When choosing an event location, consider hosting your event outside or in a building with good natural light. You can greatly reduce your energy and electricity consumption. Large events are often hosted outside, but small events can be as well. Turn your office lunch into a spring picnic!

- If many guests will be arriving to your event from off-campus, consider choosing a location easily accessible by bike and other forms of alternative or public transportation. If you encourage guests to bike, make sure there are ample bike racks near your event site. View campus bike racks on the [Facilities and Real Estate Services website](#).
Promotion

- Go paperless! Utilize digital promotion strategies.

- Use an online platform such as Eventbrite to allow guests to register and learn about your event.

- Advertise your event digitally through email listserves and social media. If you choose to use paper, make sure it is recycled. Print on the blank side of scrap paper.

- Try to be conscious of your paper and poster usage overall. We know flyers are great advertising tools, but try to reduce their usage as much as possible.

- Reuse banners and signs used in the past. If you are making new banners and signs, laminate them so that they can be reused in the future, although to do so you must exclude details (like dates) that may change from year to year.

- Promote the fact that your event is green. Use our free “Green Event” logo on your signage and digital posters. If you are encouraging guests to bike to the event, or bring their own water bottle, etc., make sure you include this information on your promotional items.
• Use reusable items as much as possible. Check with other departments to see if you can borrow items such as tablecloths and decorations.

• Avoid items like balloons that are inherently disposable. If you want to purchase giveaways, consider customizable reusable products like water bottles, hot beverage mugs, etc.

• If you already have a vendor for giveaway items, ask them what sustainable products they offer. Many supplies offer products made from recycled content.

• When you do purchase items, buy bulk-packaged products. Avoid buying items and giveaways that come in individual packaging. Even if you’re just ordering a few sandwiches for a small event, ask if they can be packaged together instead of individually wrapped.

• If you are purchasing t-shirts for guests or volunteers, buy shirts made with recycled content or organic cotton. Check out lists of Penn-approved vendors on Penn Marketplace.

• If you need to buy disposable items, paper is a better choice ecologically than plastic.

• Utilize Penn’s Green Purchasing Guide. It is a great resource containing information about green materials and sustainable suppliers.
Food & Drink

• Select a menu with as much organic, local food as possible. Serve food that is in season. There are many caterers who now specialize in providing sustainable meals. Check out Penn’s List of Approved Caterers.

• By providing a lot of vegetarian and vegan options, you can reduce your carbon footprint as well as satisfy a wide range of your guest’s dietary preferences. When serving meat, buy it from local farms that prioritize sustainable livestock operations. Avoid red meat, and check out your most sustainable seafood options at Seafood Watch.

• If your event is being catered, there are a few sustainable strategies to keep in mind. Talk to your caterer about options for reusable dishware and silverware. Many caterers will provide reusable (aka, regular) plates, glassware, and utensils and will return to pick these items up at the end of the event. Ask yourself if using reusable silverware and dishware would be appropriate for the nature and size of your event.

• Prioritize buffet-style food and request bulk containers for beverages (like water coolers), salad dressings, and condiments, as this significantly reduces waste. Opt for finger food or hors d’oeuvres that are not individually wrapped.

• If you want to go above and beyond, request that guests to bring their own dishware and water bottles. This can be inappropriate for certain events, but over the last few years it is becoming a trend amongst environmentally-minded organizations. Consider if it would work at your next event. As an incentive, guests who bring their own dishware can be automatically entered into a raffle.

• Don’t over order food! Talk to your caterer about the appropriate amount of food for the size of your event. Avoid “just guessing” how much food you need.

• Confirm your strategy, get prices, and work out logistics well in advance of the event. Make every effort to reduce or eliminate any non-recyclable containers your caterer might use. And let us know if your caterer was particularly green!
Recycling & Composting

- Make sure you have access to adequate recycling bins and know proper collection procedures. Penn recycles plastics #1-7, so most plastic cups and clean service-ware can be recycled. But remember, plastic plates and dishes with food on them cannot be recycled. Visit Penn’s Waste Management webpage to find more information on collection services.

- Organizing composting, recycling and waste bins together, in stations marked by ample signage, is an effective way to educate your guests and encourage proper disposal practices. Download signage here.

- We recommend posting signs directly above bins on a wall, or if possible, right on the lid of the bin. Signage on the side of the bin is less likely to be noticed, but it is fine if you have no other option. Make sure your bins and signs are color coded to university standards. Everything that marks recycling should be blue, compost should be green, and trash/landfill should be black.

Composting requires the collection of all food scraps your event. Some schools and centers, but not all, can support composting; talk to your Building Administrator to find out if your school can provide compost bins. Alternatively, you can request that your caterer pick up compost after the event, and ask if they are able to provide their own bins. Composting will vary depending on the size, location and scope of your event, so it’s important to understand what is and is not compostable so as to avoid contamination during collection. Only food should be going into compost bins; Penn’s compost hauler can no longer receive bioplastics and compostable plates, so please do not compost these materials. Check out The State of Composting at Penn for more details about the current compost policy.
During your event

- Communicate your sustainability efforts during your event. If you are able to make announcements, explain that in order for your event to be green, you will need the guests’ cooperation in recycling, composting, etc. Feel free to mention how your efforts contribute to achieving the goals of Penn’s *Climate Action Plan 2.0*. Announce event goals, i.e. “Our goal is to divert at least 80% of waste from landfill”.

- Display signage throughout the event space, including at the sign-in or registration table. Don’t forget to display signage where attendees are picking up their food, like buffet tables, so they know in advance that they are expected to separate and dispose of refuse properly.

- Remember you can download customizable signage from the [GCP website](#).

- If your event is large, it can be helpful to have volunteers work at waste stations and facilitate proper recycling, compost, and trash disposal. Enlist volunteers through your staff or department or ask your caterer to provide additional staff. Guests often need guidance when it comes to properly separating waste, and having volunteers at trash stations can significantly prevent contamination.

After your event

- Spread the word about your success; if you have the means to measure your compost and recycling, you can advertise how many pounds of waste you diverted from landfill.

- If you are composting, coordinate with your caterer or compost service to pick up compost after the event. Some caterers will return to the event and dispose of the compost themselves. Make sure you know where to dispose of recycling and trash.

- Let the Green Campus Partnership know that you hosted a successful green event! Email sustainability@upenn.edu.
Resources

Penn Green Campus Partnership
www.upenn.edu/sustainability/

Penn Green Purchasing
www.upenn.edu/sustainability/sustainability-themes/purchasing-practices

www.purchasing.upenn.edu/green-initiative/

Recycling and Compost Posters
www.upenn.edu/sustainability/resources/posters-signs

Waste Minimization at Penn
www.upenn.edu/sustainability/sustainability-themes/minimizing-waste

www.upenn.edu/sustainability/get-involved/rethink-your-footprint

Local Caterers
www.purchasing.upenn.edu/buyinfo/suppliers/caterers.php

Penn Green Office Certification Program
www.upenn.edu/sustainability/get-involved/green-office-program

Perelman Quadrangle Event Services
www.vpul.upenn.edu/perelmanquad/

Penn Climate Action Plan 2.0
www.upenn.edu/sustainability/node/648

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