

10 ways to reduce plastics in laboratories

Can you recycle your packaging?

Most packaging doesn't require incineration. Consider if there are ways to avoid excess clinical waste, e.g. targeting a few items which aren't contaminated to no longer go through clinical waste.

Containers for cell culture buffers, media, and supplements can usually be cleaned and added to normal recycling streams as they are not biologically contaminated.

Similarly, the rigid white plastic (HDPE) containers for chemicals can also be easily washed for recycling.



Create reagents/kits in-house:

Many common reagents and materials may be produced on site e.g. pour your own gels for DNA electrophoresis.



Could you buy bulk?

Combine and share with other labs. Only do so when certain to utilise all contents.



Can you downsize your plastics?

Sometimes there are alternatives which perform the same task with less plastic. E.g. smaller tube sizes.



Choose sustainable packaging

Some suppliers use **recyclable packaging** (paper and card), even for temperature controlled deliveries (e.g. NEB, ThermoFisher, Thorlabs, Elkay, Corning, Merck/Millipore, Bio-Techne, Cambridge Bioscience).

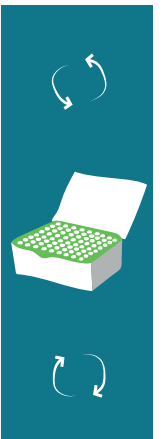
Others have devised packaging which uses **less plastic, or a greater proportion of recycled plastic** (e.g. Anachem, Gilson).

Others will **take back their packaging** (e.g. VWR, Promega, NEB, Fisher Scientific) - check with your supplier/stores to set up this service.



Tip boxes

Many suppliers provide autoclavable tip boxes (so you only need to purchase loose refill tips) and will take back tip boxes and/or the inserts for recycling (e.g. Anachem, Gilson, Starlab, VWR, Elkay, Appleton Woods, SLS, Sarsted, Greiner Bio-One) - check with your supplier/stores to set up this service.



Could your leftover plastic containers be used for something else in the lab?



Old pipette tips

Many suppliers (e.g. Anachem, Gilson) have a trade-in scheme for old (unused) pipette tips which are surplus to your requirements, providing you with store credit - check with your supplier/stores to set up this service.



Purchase 'flexible' kits:

Many labs use kits for standard processes - purchase kits which allow you to buy the contents separately - avoiding waste bottles/reagents.



Green purchasing options

Some large wholesalers (e.g. VWR, Merck/Millipore, SLS, Starlab) provide an indicator on their website/catalogue of greener options.



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