Builders: Reducing the cost of waste on site

The Halving Waste to Landfill Commitment
Specialist and SME contractors commit to:
- estimating waste
- finding ways to reduce waste
- avoiding waste on site
- recycling more waste
- recording and reporting waste

Why reduce waste?
Reducing the waste produced on site will benefit both your business and your clients.
- reducing material purchase and waste disposal costs will save you money
- meet client requirements for waste generation, reuse or recycling
- demonstrate you are an informed contractor and enhance your reputation

The True Cost of Waste
The cost of waste can be as much as £1300 per skip when you include the value of the wasted materials.

- VAT 20%
- Labour 3%
- Skip hire 12%
- Value of wasted materials 65%
Source AMEC

Use all the empty space in a skip or sack – you’re charged per pickup.

Suppliers and merchants can collect or buy wood pallets from site. Stack them neatly and phone ahead to let them know how many you have for pickup.
How can I reduce waste?
- use standard sizes and plan ahead to reduce off-cuts e.g. for timber and plasterboard
- use offsite prefabrication if possible as this is likely to reduce waste on site
- try to only order the amount you need for the job
- make arrangements to sell back or return unused materials to your supplier
- get deliveries to match work stages to avoid storage on site longer than needed
- make sure materials are delivered, handled and stored properly to avoid damage
- buy materials with less packaging
- talk to suppliers about reducing packaging waste, and ask if they can take back packaging

Waste disposal costs reduced by 66% through segregation and reuse
A two-man building company doing an 18-month renovation job for the Cooperative Society saved 66% on waste disposal costs, including using 25% fewer skips. They diverted 70% of their waste from landfill through segregation, reuse of rubble and timber and supplier take-back schemes for plasterboard.

How can I recycle more waste?
- segregate wastes – and keep hazardous wastes out of mixed waste skips – reduce waste gate fees and increase the value of materials
- send your mixed waste skip to a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) instead of a landfill site – the gate fees are often the same
- use waste contactors who will recycle your waste
- keep a check on waste markets, like wood, metals, & aggregates
- try to use suppliers who use recyclable packaging – many will also take your packaging waste away and recycle it for you

How can I reuse materials?
- arrange storage space on or off site where you can store unused materials for reuse
- collect offcuts of timber and plasterboard and half bricks and blocks for reuse – let all staff know that these are available
- use bulk bags to segregate waste and leftover materials for reuse
- coordinate trades so that leftover materials from one job can be used on the next
- don’t throw away materials like fixtures and fittings - return them to the supplier for exchange or refund, or take them with you to use on the next job
- using a mini crusher and screener for leftover bricks and hardcore could save you costs on waste and new aggregates
- try to use suppliers who use and collect returnable packaging like pallets and crates
- use online scrap groups to find takers for unused materials and salvaged items, or donate to charities and other groups

You can generate income from collecting some materials, like scrap metals – some sell for £20-45 a kilo. Check prices online.

Need help?
Helpline freephone 0808 100 2040
www.wrap.org.uk/construction