

Recycling Your Old Computer



E-waste is short for “electronic waste.” E-waste includes discarded computers, monitors, TVs, cell phones, batteries, printers, fax machines, and other items.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans generate 2.25 million short tons of e-waste each year. That accounts for roughly 2 percent of all waste generated in the United States. However, the percentage of e-waste is growing.

According to the EPA, less than 10 percent of computers are recycled. It is estimated that Americans dispose of 12–14 million computers each year. More than 75 percent of old computers are stored in closets across America; 50 percent of them could be donated.

What Should I Do First?

First, you need to decide if your computer can be reused. For many Mississippians, a computer is still a very expensive, luxury purchase. When considering whether or not to donate your old computer, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does the computer have at least 512 MB of memory? (1 GB is better. Remember, it takes 1,024 MB to equal 1 GB, so 512 MB is half of 1 GB.)
2. Does the computer have at least a 20 GB hard drive?
3. Do you have the original operating system on a CD-ROM?

If you answered yes to questions 1 and 2, then you may want to consider donating your computer. If you answered no to either question 1 or 2, it’s time to recycle the computer. Donating your computer will not do the recipient much good.

If you answered yes to question 3, keep the CD-ROM close; you will need it after you format your hard drive. If the answer to question 3 was no, you can still donate your computer. You will need to download a free operating system called Ubuntu (Linux) to a CD-ROM so you can install it after formatting the computer’s hard drive.

Donating Your Computer

Who Would Want My Old Computer?

More people can use your old computer than you might think. Take a look around your neighborhood, church, and community to see if there is anyone who might benefit from your old computer. Perhaps a local children’s home could benefit from having a computer. Children could practice typing, reading, and math skills. A local women’s shelter could use the computer to help women write résumés for jobs. Check with local pastors, schools, or community groups to see if they know someone who could use your old computer.

What Should I Do Before I Donate?

1. **BACK UP YOUR DATA!** It is imperative that you back up your data to an external hard drive, USB flash drive, or CD-ROM. It is best to have at least two backups of your data, stored in two different locations.
2. Download the Ubuntu operating system to a CD-ROM. You can download Ubuntu at <http://www.ubuntu.com/desktop/getubuntu/download>.
3. Download Open Office to a CD-ROM. Open Office is a software package that includes a word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation program. You can download Open Office from <http://www.openofficefreedownload.org/>.
4. Download the free edition of AVG anti-virus to a CD-ROM. You can download AVG anti-virus from <http://free.avg.com/us-en/homepage>.
5. Once you have verified that your data has been backed up successfully, you need to format, or “wipe,” your computer. You can download a program to CD-ROM that will wipe all the data off your computer at <http://www.dban.org/download>. Remember, if you wipe your computer hard drive, you will not be able to retrieve any information from it. This includes the operating system, software programs, and personal files and images. The computer will become a box of parts.
6. After the computer has been wiped, insert the Ubuntu CD-ROM you created earlier. Follow the on-screen prompts to install the Ubuntu operating system.
7. Reboot the computer.
8. Insert the Open Office CD-ROM that you created earlier. Follow the on-screen prompts to install Open Office.
9. Reboot the computer.
10. Install the AVG antivirus CD-ROM that you created earlier. Follow the on-screen prompts to install Open Office.

11. Verify that software programs will open and work. Install optional programs if desired. Here are some optional computer programs you might wish to install:

- Spybot Search & Destroy:
<http://www.safer-networking.org/en/download/>
- Malware Bytes:
<http://www.malwarebytes.org>
- CD Burner XP (lets you burn CD-ROMs):
<http://cdburnerxp.se/>
- PDF X-Change Viewer (lets you type on PDFs):
<http://pdf-xchange-viewer.en.softonic.com/>
- Adobe Reader:
<http://get.adobe.com/reader/>

Why Do I Have to Format My Computer?

Formatting, or “wiping,” the computer refers to the process by which all data—the operating system, office, antivirus, other programs, and most importantly, **YOUR PERSONAL DOCUMENTS**—is removed from the computer. Most recycled computers end up in countries like Ghana and China, where they are smelted down to retrieve trace amounts of precious metals. However, there is much more profit in taking your personal information off the computer and stealing your identity.



Recycling Your Computer

What Should I Do Before I Recycle?

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2. Once you have verified that your data has been backed up successfully, you will need to format, or wipe, your computer. You can download a program to CD-ROM that will wipe all the data off your computer at <http://www.dban.org/download>. Remember, if you wipe your computer hard drive, you will not be able to retrieve any information from it. This includes the operating system, software programs, and personal files and images. The computer will become a box of parts.

Who Will Recycle My Old Computer?

Do not throw your computer in the garbage! Contact one of the following Mississippi companies and have them recycle the computer for you.

Advantage E-Cycling
P.O. Box 7678
Jackson, MS 39284
(601) 939-0067
info@advantageecycling.com
<http://advantageecycling.com>

Jackson State University's
Computer Recycling & Refurbishing Program
(601) 979-1228

Nelson's Metals
P.O. Box 63
Belmont, MS 38827
(662) 454-7500

Starkville Recycling
211 C.C. Clark Road
Starkville, MS 39759
(662) 324-0930

Others:

Many major retailers will recycle your electronics regardless of whether you purchased the item from them. Listed below are a few of those companies:

- Best Buy
www.bestbuy.com/recycling
- Office Depot
<http://www.officedepot.com/abrowse/recycling-services/N=5+509883/>
- Staples
www.staples.com/sbd/crelmarketinglecoeasy/index.html
- Walmart
<http://walmartstores.com/Sustainability/8787.aspx>

Other companies will recycle computers or electronics they made. Listed below are a few of those companies:

- Dell
<http://content.dell.com/us/en/corp/cr-dell-earth-recycling.aspx>
- HP
<http://www.HP.com/Recycle>
- Reconnect (Dell Partner)
<http://reconnectpartnership.com/>
- Toshiba
<http://us.toshiba.com/green/reuse-and-recycling>

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