

# Guide to recycling envelopes

[www.m4c-sustainability.co.uk](http://www.m4c-sustainability.co.uk)

# What to do with envelopes

There are lots of rumours going around about what can and what can't be recycled; do you have to remove the plastic window? What about the glue?!

We were a little confused so we've put this guide together to try and explain how envelopes can be recycled...

## What are envelopes made from?

Envelopes are made from paper and glue, and often have plastic address panes. Padded envelopes are made with thicker paper and then padded with plastic and/or other filler materials such as shredded paper fibre etc.

Unfortunately there is no simple answer as to whether or not envelopes can be recycled; it depends on the facilities used by the local authority. If they can process the glue then there's no problem and envelopes can be put out with the rest of the paper recycling, if not then they will eventually have to go to landfill - unless you can think of something creative to do with them!

It is very rare for padded envelopes (often know through their trade name Jiffy Bags) to be accepted for recycling as they are a "composite material", in other words they are made up of more than one thing. Plastic windows are not normally a problem for paper mills as the window can usually be easily screened out during the manufacturing process.

## How can I recycle envelopes?

Firstly check that your local authority can accept them through their website or by giving them a ring. If they can, then put them out for kerbside recycling or into the paper bank at your nearest recycling centre. There are some local authorities where envelopes are not collected because some paper mills cannot process the glues which are present in envelopes.



## Suggestions for reducing and reusing envelopes

- Contact the Mailing Preference Service to avoid receiving unsolicited mail: <http://www.mpsonline.org.uk/>  
Make someone responsible for returning unwanted mail and removing contact details from mailing lists
- Use e-mail rather than sending letters/invoices through the post and encourage customers and suppliers to do the same
- Stick a label on old envelopes and use them again and again and again! You can get gummed labels from Friends of the Earth or Oxfam
- Collect used stamps and take them to an Oxfam shop to help with fundraising
- Clip a handful of envelopes together and use as a notepad
- Remove the plastic windows and shred for composting
- Practice Origami!

### Post Its!

Many people think you can't recycle post its because of the glue. But this is a similar situation to envelopes. If the paper recycling mill can cope with the glue then yes they can be recycled. We recommend calling your local council to find out if its possible in your area.

## Useful links and sources:

- \* <http://www.recyclethis.co.uk/20060515/how-can-i-reuse-or-recycle-used-envelopes>
- \* <http://www.biggreenswitch.co.uk/recycling/reuse-envelopes>
- \* <http://www.recycling.co.uk/envelopes>

## Contacts us

### M4C

To find out more about what we do take a look at our website or give us a call

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