

Introduction

Welcome to Week 11 of the 2018 CGOP! This week we will be talking all about coffee, with Elective Actions #13 & #14. Catch up on past newsletters [here!](#)

13. Eliminate use of single use disposable coffee pods.
14. Zero out your coffee waste. Use a reusable filter if possible and don't purchase individual sugar packets, creamer tubs, stirrers, etcetera.

#14 is a two-point action.

As a reminder, completion of five Elective Actions beyond the Required Actions will earn you Bronze Level certification, completion of ten will earn Silver Level certification, and fifteen Elective Actions will earn Gold Level certification.

Instructions

Elective Action #13: Eliminate use of single use disposable coffee pods such as Keurig or Nespresso.

It's probably not brand new information for most of you that single use coffee pods have an awful environmental impact. The most popular of such pods and coffee machines is the Keurig, which brews coffee and other beverages from single-use plastic pods, called K-Cups, that are non-biodegradable and in most places non-recyclable. Despite the growing awareness of the environmental perils of this design model, Keurig routinely sells three billion or more K-Cups a year. The cups may be small, but with numbers like that, their volume rapidly accumulates.

K-Cups are made out of #7 type plastic, which is not commonly recyclable and the main reason why it is so important to cut back on their consumption. There are programs to ship masses of used K-Cups to places where they can be incinerated or recycled, but doing so also uses carbon energy to transport them (and incineration of plastic often results in air pollution). The company that manufactures Keurig products, Green Mountain Roasters, has promised that all K-Cups made will be recyclable by 2020. However, this is still a small ways away. And even once this happens, there are still plenty of impacts that will be made just by the production of these cups, not to mention that they will not all actually get recycled.

Keurigs and other similar systems are popular and convenient, making them abundant in offices. If your office has a Keurig, we know that it will be hard to let go of. Thankfully, it's not absolutely necessary to get rid of it. The company also

produces the “My K-Cup,” which is a reusable K-Cup filter. With a My K-Cup, any type of coffee grounds or other beverage base can be loaded into it, so the main drawback is not being able to partake in Keurig’s variety of singular cup flavors. But a My K-Cup costs only about \$10, so it will also save you money in the long run -- just like many eco-friendly office adjustments will! Be advised that there are different models of Keurigs and My K-Cups, so before purchasing one, be sure that it is compatible with the machine you have.

Of course, an alternate option is to simply swap out your Keurig with a standard coffee machine. Either option is acceptable for the Elective Action. However, if you have another type of single use coffee system, be sure to check if there is a reusable cup option for sale. If there isn’t, then the only way to complete this action will be to replace the machine with a standard coffee maker.

Elective Action #14: Zero out your coffee waste. Use a reusable filter if possible and don’t purchase individual sugar packets, creamer tubs, or stirrers. Reusing leftovers from events is acceptable (Two points).

As dependent as we are on coffee, it is unfortunate truth that even conventional coffee brewing produces a lot of waste. From the grounds to filters to everything we use doctor up our caffeine, there’s a lot of potential to cut back. Let’s go through each one.

1. Filters
 - a. For every pot of coffee we brew, one paper filter is used. Imagine the amount of trees needed to supply all the filters used across the planet! Really, it makes no sense not to use reusable filters instead, and thankfully there are plenty of options. There are two main types: filters made out of plastic and mesh, like [this one](#), or cloth filters that look much more like traditional paper ones. Check out the [Coffee Sock](#) for an example of these.
2. Sugar packets
 - a. This one’s pretty easy -- instead of purchasing individual sugar packets, buy larger containers of sugar and keep a community sugar cup available for everyone to use.
3. Creamer tubs
 - a. Again, forgo the individual tubs in favor of a larger community container of creamer or milk.
4. Stirrers
 - a. Getting rid of stirrers will be especially easy if you’ve also completed Elective Action #12: Stop purchasing disposable dishware, and have reusable spoons available for stirring. Even if you haven’t completed

this action, replacing stirrers with a set of spoons will cut way back on these sticks that are often only used for a few seconds total!

5. Grounds

- a. This one's a bonus -- there is no requirement for the disposal of grounds to get the points for this action. However, we would encourage collecting your coffee grounds to be composted instead of throwing them away. This will probably require that you ask around to see if anyone knows someone who composts who would take the grounds off your hands, unless someone in your office composts at home. Of course, another option would be to set up a compost system within your office, which would a great way to divert even more food waste, but definitely takes a bit of work (and maybe some mess!)