

In a time where having a cell phone is synonymous with having the ability to breathe, mobile companies continue to offer the opportunity to “upgrade” one’s phone after some time, to accommodate advances in technology. While this is a benefit to our social lives and the ease through which we can accomplish everyday tasks, it also results in a surplus of disregarded, “outdated”, “old” cellular phones. Whether they now appear in your junk drawer, underneath your driver’s side seat, or in the chew toy section of your pet’s bed, these devices can and should be recycled. Although it is tempting to forget our phones of the past as we eagerly sync our new, “better” phones to our existing social media accounts, it is important to remember that our former phones should be recycled for the benefit of the earth’s health.

### Why Recycle Phones?

Mobile phones and other digital devices contain a variety of materials, metals, plastics, and copper. These materials are conserved in the recycling process. As a result, recycling cell phones cuts down on the emissions that occur during the extraction and processing of these materials in the formation of new devices. Just about all of the materials that result from recycled mobile devices can be used for the benefit of the creation of jewelry and garden furniture, plastic packaging, and the manufacturing of other electronics and automotive supplies. Even better, the market for refurbished phones extends far beyond the United States, providing those who would typically find the purchasing of mobile devices to be unaffordable the opportunity to communicate via modern technology.

### Let’s Talk Numbers

To put things into perspective, there are more than 500 million cell phones awaiting a proper recycling disposal at this time in the United States, and another 130 million are expected to be added to this statistic by next year.

As the average American opts to upgrade his/her phone within every 24-month period, the result is 65,000 tons of electronic trash—toxic trash that clogs up landfill space and pollutes both air and ground water.

The proper recycling of just one cell phone is enough ammo to power a laptop for 44 hours.

Just 10% of the cell phones used in the United States are currently being recycled.

About 35,274 pounds of copper, 772 pounds of silver, 75 pounds of gold, and 33 pounds of palladium can be recovered for every one million cell phones recycled. For the same amount of recycled phones, 185 U.S. households could be provided with electricity for one year.

Maybe you can think of a few phones at home that you kept around—maybe for pictures or old videos—but the benefits of recycling just this one phone surely outweigh the opportunity to save this media elsewhere, a task typically postponed. It’s incredibly important to maintain a close relationship with advancements in technology, but it is, perhaps, more significant to not disregard our former phones so easily and keep the planet on which we’re so proud to walk out of harm’s way.