



## Q+A

## Deconstruction

### What are your tips for deconstructing and recycling building materials?

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Big50 1998 with SawHorse Inc.

Landfills are a limited resource, as is the fuel required to transport materials to them. Anything saved from a job and reused or recycled reduces consumption of energy and resources. Recycling can also save money and provide tax benefits for you and your clients.

With the proper planning and effort, you can redirect half or more of your waste from landfills through recycling and reuse. It's not complicated, but there is a learning curve. Challenges include tight jobsites, client objections to storing waste on the job, and finding places to take recyclables.

Off-site reuse can include milling valuable old lumber into new trim and flooring, and selling or donating old brick, cabinets, doors, and plumbing fixtures. Nonprofits will provide receipts for homeowner tax deductions.

On-site recycling typically involves hiring grinding companies to pulverize wood, drywall, brick, tile, and other materials that can be reused as mulch, soil amendments, and gravel. Those same materials can be hauled off site to be ground, as can scrap concrete. You can also have drink containers, cardboard, appliances, carpet, and scrap metal hauled to recycling yards.

In some cases, the scrap value of these products offsets the cost of hauling them, saving dump fees. Certain high-value products, such as aluminum and copper, can be sold at a profit.

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First, get the buy-in of clients and team members. Deconstructing and reusing materials does make the demo phase take longer, but most people understand the benefit of sending as little as possible to the landfill. It's rare for our clients to not want to reuse or recycle.

We also work closely with our trade partners (plumbers, floor installers, etc.) in identifying cost-effective ways to deconstruct and recycle. In all of our projects, we separate out all materials that can be taken to the appropriate recycling centers. Our Dumpster service helps make this happen.

In large projects, we work closely with a wonderful organization in Baltimore called Second Chance. They spend about two weeks deconstructing and taking as many salvageable items and systems out of the house as possible, such as roof shingles, wood flooring, wiring, piping, lighting fixtures, plumbing fixtures, windows, and cabinets.

#### RUSSELL CLARK

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As early in the process as possible, identify any materials — especially those that are of value — that are slated for removal. Talk with your clients about how to dispose of them: do they want to sell some items or donate them for a tax credit? If the clients don't care what happens, ask them to give disposition rights over to the company.

A number of realities hinder the potential of capturing building materials for donation and reuse. One possibility may be to hire a deconstruction company, which will carefully remove anything as small as a kitchen or "unbuild" anything as large as an entire house. Or, begin by identifying local outlets that accept salvaged and surplus building materials. Two good Web sources are Habitat for Humanity's "ReStores" page and the Building Materials Reuse Association.

Contact your local outlets to learn what materials they accept, whether they pick up donated materials or require them to be dropped off, what their pick-up lead times are, whether they pay for certain items, and whether they give tax credit receipts for donated items. Send photos of these items to help the organizations decide whether they want what you have.

Label "acceptable" items prior to deconstruction/demolition, and make sure the team performing the work understands what to save, how to remove it, and how to keep the items in the best condition possible.

If the accepting organization can pick up the items, try to anticipate when the project's permit will be approved, and give the organization plenty of lead time. Identify areas of the property where the items can be stored temporarily until the pick-up team arrives. Confirm pick-up dates as soon as your permit is in hand and your decon/demo team is under way. And obtain documentation for any tax credit or monetary compensation received for the donation. **R**



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