

A Greener Office- Writing and Correction

Source: The Green Office (www.thegreenoffice.com)

Each writing tool, from the ubiquitous No 2 pencil to the neon-colored highlighter to the correction-fluid pen, has a different set of sustainability concerns. The most common issues involve (1) inks, and (2) casing materials

Inks often contain harmful pollutants, such as heavy metals and volatile organic compound (VOC) -emitting petroleum solvents. Heavy metals, such as barium, copper, and zinc, are used in coloration processes and pose a threat when allowed to contaminate soil and groundwater. Petroleum based solvents, used to disperse pigments and speed drying, emit harmful VOCs that contribute to smog formation and can act as an irritant to humans.

The casings of writing tools are also of great environmental concern. Wood used in a traditional No 2 pencil often comes from virgin wood, while the plastic casings of most pens, highlighters, and markers usually contain no recycled materials.

Writing Tool Option	Recommendation	Comments
Recycled Casing	Best	Using products with recycled content helps to reduce natural resource use
Alternative Casing	Very good	Often times made from recycled content, these can include pens and pencils made from old money, jeans and even school lunch trays.
Soy Ink	Best	Reduces the use of petrochemical inks used for most products
Water-based Correction Fluid	Best	This product is non-toxic and VOC free
Low VOC Markers	Best	Reduces indoor air pollution by reducing a major source of office VOC release

Best Practices

Consider the following suggestions for your office:

- Label Writing Utensils: Consider labeling writing utensils to avoid misplacing them.
- Re-cap Writing Utensils After Use: It will increase the product's life and can also reduce VOC release.

