RECYCLE OFTEN.
RECYCLE RIGHT.℠

Mixed Curbside Residential Recycling

Myth Busters

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RecycleOftenRecycleRight.com
#RORR

WASTE MANAGEMENT

RECYCLING RULES

1. RECYCLE ALL BOTTLES, CANS AND PAPER
2. KEEP ITEMS CLEAN AND DRY
3. NO PLASTIC BAGS

Always recycle:

Plastic Bottles & Containers

Plastic bottles, jars, jugs and tubs

Food & Beverage Cans

Tin, aluminum, steel food and beverage cans

Paper

Cardboard, paper, newspaper, paperboard, magazines

Flattened Cardboard & Paperboard

Flatten all boxes (do not bundle/tie up)

Do NOT include in your mixed recycling cart:

NO Food Waste

(Compost instead!)

NO Plastic Bags & Film

(Find a recycling site at plasticfilmrecycling.org.)

NO Foam Cups & Containers

(Check Earth911.org for options.)

NO Needles

(Keep medical waste out of recycling. Place in safe disposal containers like Waste Management's MedWaste Tracker® box.)

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MYTH: Most Americans recycle all they can

ANSWER: False

Research shows convenience and commitment are required for maximum recycling. For instance, is there more than one location in a household to store recyclables? If not, recyclables in areas other than the kitchen get thrown away.

Additionally, is there only one committed recycler in a household (usually the person who picks up after everyone)? If so, studies indicate making this a family/partner affair where everyone participates, allows the most recycling of the right materials.

MYTH: The recycling arrows (Mobius) on a container means it is recyclable at a Material Recovery Facility (MRF)

ANSWER: Only in some cases

Manufacturers strive to get eco-friendly information on their product labels. It sells. The FTC requires that a product have at least 60% access to local programs (like Material Recovery Facility processing) across the U.S. to include the Mobius on their products. However, the Mobius is not a reliable indicator of whether something gets recycled. There are thousands of plastic products and packaging, and each one has its own unique chemical recipe. Many plastics cannot be made into new products at this time. Recycle plastics by shape: bottles, jars, jugs and tabs.

MYTH: It doesn't matter if something belongs in the recycling cart, the hauler will sort everything anyway

ANSWER: False

There are increasing amounts of non-recyclables sent to Material Recovery Facilities, and every single one of them must be removed by hand by trained staff and/or mechanically sorted, or they end up contaminating high value recyclables. Non-recyclable garbage placed into recycling containers increases the cost of the recycling process and will increase the cost of garbage and recycling collection service.

Similarly, recyclable items placed into garbage containers are usually hauled to a landfill. Recyclables in a landfill cannot be recovered effectively. Even if further processing takes place, the full value is lost. The right thing to do is to put the all the right recyclables in the recycling container and non-recyclables into the garbage containers. Recyclables with the greatest impact are bottles, cans, and paper.

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Plastic FAQs.

Are these items recyclable in my curbside mixed recycling program?

ITEM	ANSWER	MORE INFO
Plastic bottle caps/lids	Yes. After bottles are empty, plastic caps should be placed back on bottles.	"Until recently the plastics recycling industry was not able to effectively recycle bottles with caps on so the message to remove the cap was created. But recycling collection and processing technology have improved and demand for the recyclable material has increased and this allows for the updated caps-on recycling message and process." Association of Post Consumer Plastic Recyclers: http://www.plasticsrecycling.org/faqs/caps-on-faqs
Plastic bags	No. Do not put loose plastic bags or bagged recyclables into cart – empty recyclables into cart.	Plastic bags are not accepted in most curbside recycling programs (they get tangled in the MRF equipment, breaking or stopping machinery.) (See KAB Sept 15, 2014 campaign). Empty plastic bags should go back to a participating retail outlet or grocery store for recycling. For more information, visit: http://recycleyourplastics.org/Main/Plastic-bags-film.html.olc OR http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org/s01/s01dropoff.html
Plastic film	No	Plastic stretch wrap, bubble wrap, and other plastic films get tangled in the MRF equipment, breaking or stopping machinery (See KAB Sept 15, 2014 campaign). There are also different types of plastic film that are not compatible with each other and hard to tell apart for Material Recovery Facility workers, and even harder to sell if mixed together. Plastic film should go back to a participating retail outlet or grocery store for recycling. For more information, visit: http://recycleyourplastics.org/Main/Plastic-bags-film.html OR http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org/s01/s01dropoff.html

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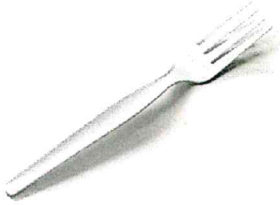
MYTH: All plastics can be recycled.

ANSWER: False

Not all plastics can be successfully recycled. At this time, only some plastics can be made into new things. Recycle plastics by shape: bottles, jars, jugs and tubs.

ITEM	ANSWER	MORE INFO
Clamshell Packaging	No	The plastic "to go" containers or containers holding berries, apples, bakery items, etc., are not consistently made of high-value plastic, are difficult to recycle and are usually contaminated with food when disposed. See more at: http://oregonstate.edu/sustainability/blog/2014/01/recycling-mythbusters-plastic-recyclables
Plastic eatery: utensils, plates and cups 	No	Plastic straws, utensils, including "compostable" utensils, plastic plates and plastic cups come in such a wide variety of non-usable, low-grade plastics that it is impossible to identify and separate the recyclables from the non-recyclable look-alikes (same as the clamshells). Fast food packaging, like utensils, are complicated and are not readily recovered through modern Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs), or by secondary processors who buy MRF bales.
Chip bags, nutritional bar or candy wrappers	No	There is no real end market for this, often hybrid material. In fact, there are only a few niche markets for it. Please consult your local municipality to discover any specialty recycling opportunities.

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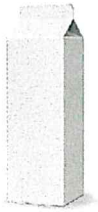
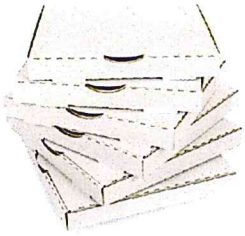
Paper/Cardboard FAQs.

Are these items recyclable in my curbside mixed recycling program?

ITEM	ANSWER	MORE INFO
Cartons 	Varies by jurisdiction	Juice boxes (no pouches), milk and juice cartons (emptied and rinsed, no pouches or straws) are recyclable in some areas.
Pizza boxes (without food or paper liners/doilies) 	Yes	Clean pizza boxes (without food or paper liners/doilies) are acceptable. At one point, pizza boxes were made with a wax coating that made them not acceptable. The new pizza boxes (often with a paper doily serving as a moisture barrier) are high-potential recyclables and should be included in curbside recycling materials.
Single serve hot beverage cups	No	Hot paper cups and have a plastic or waxed coating that does not break down during the re-pulping process at paper mills. The plastic lids typically used on these cups are not recyclable either (even if they have the recycling symbol on them).

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ITEM	ANSWER	MORE INFO
Napkins, paper towels, tissues	No	Napkins, paper towels and tissues are made of low-grade fiber, and are usually soiled when disposed. They are not recyclable in single stream residential Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs). The cardboard tube in the middle of the roll of paper towels or toilet tissue can be recycled.
Shredded paper	No	Shredded paper is recyclable when there are large source separated quantities of the material, directly baled, and not run over a sorting system. This is an option for commercial customers and mobile shredding companies, but does not work well for residential single-stream Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs). Because of its size and elasticity, it does not separate easily from other materials, i.e. it cross-contaminates bottles and cans. It also blinds many of the technologies from working correctly in a MRF and lessens glass quality. Many municipal programs require its inclusion, but a small amount of shredded paper actually makes it back to market through MRFs.
Paper cups, plates	No	Paper cups and plates have a plastic or waxed coating that does not break down during the re-pulping process at paper mills. The plastic lids typically used on these cups are not recyclable either (even if they have the recycling symbol on them).

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Glass FAQs.

Is glass recyclable in my curbside mixed recycling program?

ITEM	ANSWER	MORE INFO
Glass Bottles & Jars	Varies by jurisdiction	Glass recycling varies by jurisdiction. Glass collection varies widely in communities across the U.S. Some communities collect glass at drop off locations only, some collect glass separately at the curb or with other containers, and many include glass with all other recyclables. Bottle bill laws in CA, CT, OR, IA, MI, ME, VT, MA, NY allow for the return of a per-bottle deposit when bottles are returned to return-centers or retailers for recycling. Please refer to your community's website for information on glass recycling in your local community.

Aerosol Can FAQs.

ITEM	ANSWER	MORE INFO
Aerosol Cans	Varies by jurisdiction	Most of recycling programs accept empty/dry aerosol cans. Aerosol cans without the caps are recyclable if they are empty/dry. If they are not, then they could be dangerous. Some fires are caused in baler chambers from trace amounts of can chemicals, and cans have been known to become projectiles when densified/baled if propellant is still present. WM facilities and commodity vendors accept steel, mixed metal, and aluminum aerosol packages. Multi-material aerosol packages are not recyclable. There is no gray area here from a processor standpoint. However, some cities still list aerosols on their no-recycle lists. Check with your local municipality for further information.

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General FAQs.

1. How clean is "clean"?

Use a spatula to scrape cans and jars, e.g., peanut butter, syrup, salad dressing, oil, etc., or jugs, e.g., bleach, household non-toxic chemical cleaners, etc.

There is no need to rinse - just empty and clean. With some of our severe drought areas, rinsing makes no sense at all.

2. What about hoses, tanks, shower curtains, swing sets and everything else?

If it's not "bottles, cans or paper" it probably doesn't belong in your curbside mixed recycling cart and may even require special handling.

There are other resources (e.g., Earth911.org) that can help answer questions about what to do with non-recyclables or household hazardous waste.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

© 2014 Waste Management, Inc. The Recycle Often. Recycle Right.℠ recycling education program was developed based upon national best practices. Please consult your local municipality for their acceptable materials and additional details of local programs, which may differ slightly.