

How to Prepare Your Recycling Bin: General Guidelines

The collection, recycling, and reuse of many common household materials conserves natural resources, diverts waste from landfills, and supports the employment of more than 66,000 workers of Pennsylvania's recycling marketplace. Approximately 11.6 million residents have convenient access to recycling, and many of those have access to one of the more than 1,050 curbside collection programs. In 2015 alone, Pennsylvanians recycled over 7.75 million tons of resources. Despite these figures, potentially recyclable material continues to be lost each year due to growing contamination. Following a few simple guidelines at the recycling bin can greatly impact the safety, quality, and effectiveness of the recycling stream.

Materials That Cause Problems

The most common materials that cause problems include plastic bags, plastic film, garden hoses, and wiring. Never include any material that may bind or restrict recycling sorting machinery. Sortation lines are routinely shut down due to the inclusion of these materials, which must be manually removed and disposed of by workers.

Never include any potentially hazardous material in your curbside bin. Examples are propane tanks, broken glass, needles, etc. In addition to contributing to contamination in the recycling stream, these materials are dangerous to the haulers and workers handling this material.

Commonly Accepted and Unacceptable Material

While not all inclusive, below are some of the most common items to keep in and out of the recycling bin; however, it is important to check with your local recycling program prior to including/excluding any material:



Include:

- Plastic bottles and containers
- Cardboard and paperboard
- Aluminum, tin and steel cans
- Magazines and newspaper
- Glass bottles and containers

Do Not Include:

- Plastic bags or plastic films
- Recyclables in plastic bags
- Any soiled/wet/greasy material
- Food waste
- Disposable polystyrene containers
- Broken glass
- Ceramics, crystal, and leaded glass
- Plastic toys, bins, bulk items
- Propane tanks

Preparing Your Recycling Bin

Clean Recyclables. A quick rinse in most cases is adequate in removing food waste residue. However, if the container or material is heavily soiled with food waste residue or grease, and cannot be cleaned, it should be discarded in the trash.

Dry Recyclables. After rinsing out containers, ensure all containers are free of excessive moisture. Moisture itself can contaminate the recycling stream as it greatly degrades the quality and recoverability of cardboard and other fiber-based materials.

Don't Break Glass. Aside from being a hazard to collectors and workers on the sorting line, broken glass degrades the quality and recoverability of fiber-based materials. It is important to follow your local recycling program guidelines concerning glass and only include it in the approved manner.

Put in the Correct Recyclables. Only include recyclables your program collects. Some material may potentially be recyclable; however, if your local recycling program does not collect the material, do not include it in your bin. Incorrect material causes contamination and good recyclable material can end up in a landfill.

Follow Your Local Recycling Program's Instructions

Know what recyclables can be accepted by your local recycling program to reduce contamination in the recycling stream. Check with your local hauler or local government to see what materials are handled by your program. Another good resource to find out more about your local recycling program is through your county recycling coordinator. County recycling coordinator contact information can be found at www.dep.pa.gov > Businesses > Land > Waste > Recycling > Public Resources > County Recycling Coordinators.

For More Information

Visit www.dep.pa.gov > Businesses > Land > Waste > Recycling, or contact the Recycling Hotline at 800-346-4242.