



Curbside Residential Recycling Myths



Don't let recycling myths get in the way of recycling right.

Use these recycling tips and myth-busting facts to recycle with confidence and help keep valuable materials out of the landfill.

Learn the truth behind common recycling myths.



MYTH:

I don't have enough space at home to recycle.

FACT:

Successful recycling is more about convenience than space. A small bin, reusable tote, or cardboard box is all you need to collect recyclables at home. Consider placing recycling containers in areas where recyclables are commonly used. When recycling is easy and everyone in the household participates, more recyclable materials stay out of the landfill.



MYTH:

If an item has the recycling arrows symbol, it can be recycled in my curbside program.

FACT:

Not always. While manufacturers often use the recycling arrows (Mobius) symbol to indicate a product may be recyclable somewhere, the symbol doesn't guarantee the item is accepted in your local recycling program.

Because plastics are made from many different materials, some can be recycled and others cannot. For best results, recycle clean and empty plastic bottles, cups, jars, jugs, and tubs and follow your local recycling guidelines.

**MYTH:**

Containers must be squeaky clean to be recycled.

FACT:

Containers don't need to be squeaky clean, but they should be empty and free of most food and liquid residue. The goal is to keep recyclables clean enough to avoid contaminating other materials, especially paper and cardboard. A quick scrape or rinse can help prevent contamination and keep other recyclables, like paper and cardboard, clean and recyclable.

**MYTH:**

It doesn't matter what I put in the recycling container, the recycling facility will sort it out.

FACT:

What you place in the recycling container matters. Non-recyclable items can contaminate recyclable materials, slow the sorting process, increase costs, and create safety risks for workers. To help keep recycling programs effective, stick to accepted recyclables such as clean and empty bottles, cups, jars, jugs, and tubs, along with paper, cardboard, and cans. When in doubt, it's better to place an item in the trash than risk contaminating other recyclables.

**MYTH:**

It's plastic, so it must be recyclable.

FACT:

Not all plastic items can be recycled through your curbside recycling program. Items such as hoses, toys, storage bins, shower curtains, and other plastic products may be made of plastic, but they are not accepted in most residential recycling programs. When in doubt, remember the basics: recycle clean and empty bottles, cups, jars, jugs, and tubs, along with paper, cardboard, and cans. Keeping non-recyclable items out of the recycling container helps ensure valuable materials can be properly recycled.

**MYTH:**

Aerosol cans always belong in the recycling container.

FACT:

Not always. Recycling guidelines for aerosol cans vary by community. Empty aerosol cans are often accepted for recycling, but partially full cans can pose safety risks during collection and processing. Always make sure aerosol cans are completely empty and follow your local recycling guidelines.

**MYTH:**

All glass bottles and jars can be recycled in my curbside program.

FACT:

It depends on where you live. Glass recycling programs vary by community. Some areas accept glass in curbside recycling, while others require glass to be recycled separately or taken to a drop-off location. Always follow your local recycling guidelines to ensure glass is recycled properly.



MYTH:

It's okay to toss batteries in the recycling container.

FACT:

Batteries should never be placed in recycling or trash containers. Even when they appear dead, batteries can cause fires when damaged or crushed during collection and sorting. Store batteries separately and take them to a designated battery recycling or household hazardous waste collection site. Proper battery disposal helps protect people, equipment, and the recycling process.

For information on safe disposal of batteries please visit batterysafetynow.org



MYTH:

When in doubt, throw it in the recycling container.

FACT:

That's called wishcycling—hoping an item can be recycled without knowing for sure. Unfortunately, wishcycling can contaminate recyclable materials and make the recycling process less efficient. Recycling the right items is more important than recycling more items.



For more information, visit:
wm.com/recycleright

