

# Recycle Right, For Tomorrow®

Best Practices for Front of House  
Recycling and Organics Programs

Helping everyone **Recycle Right®**  
takes work. We hope this guide will  
help your program be successful.



## Key Definitions

**Front of House:** Areas accessible to customers.

**Back of House:** Areas only accessible to employees.

**Recycling:** The process of transforming a material into something new. Typically, materials that can be recycled include bottles, cans, paper and cardboard.

**Organics Processing:** The process of turning organic matter back into soil or feedstock for biofuels. Organic material can include fruit, veggies, meat, bones, and similar items.

**IMPORTANT: The more waste streams you are collecting, the more important it is to have clear standard collection processes and signage.**

**Choosing a Bin - Consider the following components for an effective diversion program.**

- Space and Pairing** - Choose bin systems that allow trash, recycling, and organics bins to fit together in the space available. Bins that stand alone risk contamination and missing materials for diversion.
- Serviceability** - Look for lid or door configurations that make liner changes as easy as possible for custodial staff and prevent injury.
- Appearance** - Differentiate streams with bin colors (i.e., blue for recycling, green for organics and black for trash). Designate a liner color system that corresponds with the bin color scheme.
- Labeling Bins** - Choose bins with ample surface area for clear, visible stream labels and instructional signage. Signage should be easy to see, typically placed on the top and/or at eye level. Label each stream on all visible surfaces (e.g. top, front and sides).
- Lids and Lid Opening** - Use lids with restricted openings to deter contamination and prevent theft of recyclables. The location of the opening should be on the same side for all bins (e.g., bin opening is on top for all material streams).
- Other Considerations** - Durability, transportability, and security/anti-theft of recyclables from outdoor bins.



## Front of House Best Practices

- Clarity** - Make recycling simple and easy to understand with clear visual cues using different bin colors and signage. Clear signage includes symbols or images of common acceptable materials. Signs should use text sparingly. Translate to local languages. Post messaging around the business to support the recycling program.
- Convenience** - Make it easy to recycle by placing trash, organics and recycle bins next to each other. Use discretion when placing bins in areas where only non-recyclables are generated.
- Capacity** - Avoid overflow of materials by selecting bins of adequate size and/or emptying bins regularly.

## Back of House Best Practices

- Local Requirements** - Understand hauler rules of recycling and organics, definition of contamination, and local ordinances. Ordinances vary. Confirm program aligns with local state and municipal laws.
- Signage & Labeling** - Clearly label streams on containers for employee use. Reach out to your local WM team for technical assistance if available in your area.
- Right-size** - Ensure back of house containers (including dumpsters) have enough capacity for all recycling, organics and trash to prevent overflow between WM service days.
- Employee Training** - Include recycling in standard employee training and build into new employee onboarding. Elect a champion to monitor the recycling and organics and provide feedback to the team. Reinforce every 3-6 months.
- Training Topic: Lining Bins** - Recyclables in bags are typically considered contamination in recycling dumpsters. If lining bins is unavoidable, use different liner colors to easily differentiate streams (i.e., different bag colors).
- Disposal** - Unless otherwise instructed, train employees to empty recycling from bags loosely into dumpster to avoid contamination charges, if applicable. Refer to local requirements for disposing organics loose or in liners.



## Best Practice to Understand Material Streams

Identify top acceptable items and contaminants, via visual inspection or a physical hand sort. Update bin and sign placement and education efforts accordingly. When possible, adjust procurement practices for commonly confusing products to align with local acceptance of particular items so it's easier on tenants and customers.

These guidelines and best practices are based on the industry experience of WM and its affiliates and may not be applicable or compliant in all instances. Please read and understand applicable state and municipal laws on recycling and organics collection and processing, as these laws and regulations can vary. WM disclaims any responsibility for its customers' compliance with such laws and regulations.