

Recycling for Kids

Instead of throwing everything away in the trash so it will end up in a landfill, you can recycle many things so they can become new products. Recycling reduces waste and helps save natural resources such as wood and water. You can feel good about helping the environment when you recycle because you'll be saving energy and reducing pollution.

What Is Recycling?

Recycling involves separating items that you're getting rid of into different groups. Some items can't be recycled, but you can separate out many paper products, cans, glass, and plastic so these things can be taken to special facilities to be recycled for future use.

- Recycling facilities sort, clean, and process items so they can be used to make new things.
- After being sorted and processed, these materials are ready to be sold to manufacturers to be formed into new items.

Who Recycles?

Everyone can recycle. Businesses and schools can recycle, and families can recycle, too.

- When you recycle at home, you can use separate bins to collect the different items. But in some places, you can put everything recyclable into one big bin without having to sort it.
- When you recycle at school, pay attention to the bins they have so you throw items into the correct ones.

What Can You Recycle?

Recyclable materials include cardboard, newspapers, plastic and glass bottles, plastic containers, aluminum and steel cans, and some other types of paper.

- Look on the bottoms of plastic bottles and containers to find a symbol. The symbol will tell you whether you can recycle the item.
- Most communities accept glass bottles and containers made out of different colored glass.
- Communities often accept paper and paper products, too.

What Can't You Recycle?

Some items are not recyclable. It can be tempting to place some items into the recycling bin, even if you're not sure if they're recyclable, but when people do this, they can place facility workers in danger as they're sorting items.

- Plastic bags and plastic wraps may be recyclable, but not in curbside pickup bins.
- Electric cords, chains, wires, and hoses are not recyclable in curbside pickup bins. These items can tangle in sorting equipment.
- Hazardous materials such as paint, oil, gas, or poisons are not recyclable.
- Diapers are not recyclable.
- Packaging with food stuck to the inside should be cleaned first before recycling them.
- Propane tanks are not recyclable.
- Large and bulky plastic items such as laundry baskets and play furniture are not recyclable.

How Are Things Recycled?

Recycling involves collecting and processing materials into a form that can be used to make new things. Recycled raw materials are sold to manufacturers to make new items.

- Collection includes curbside pickup, drop-off centers, and buy-back centers that will pay consumers to bring their items to be recycled.
- Processing involves cleaning and sorting the items so they can be turned back into raw materials. Items might be broken down into little pieces or melted down.
- After processing, the materials are sold to manufacturers, who use them either alone or by mixing them with other materials to make new products.

Why Do You Recycle?

It's helpful to think of recycling as a closed loop. The loop includes using something, collecting it, processing it, and making something new to be used. It's important to keep that loop closed to protect our environment.

- By keeping items inside the recycling loop, we reduce waste and keep products out of landfills.
- Recycling reduces pollution, saves energy, and makes jobs.

Related Resources for Kids

- [Recycle This](#)
- [Recycling Game](#)
- [Environment for Kids: Recycling](#)
- [Recycling Sorting Game](#)
- [Make a Robot From Household Junk](#)
- [Recycle Roundup](#)
- [Recycling Game](#)
- [Recycling Activities and Games for Kids](#)
- [All About Recycling](#)
- [Clean and Green Game](#)
- [Teaching Kids to Recycle](#)
- [Recycle City](#)
- [The Quest for Less](#)
- [Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Fun Activities to Teach Kids About Reducing Waste](#)
- [Where Trash Goes](#)