



Info Sheet

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Recycling Plastic Bottles

Lightweight, shatterproof plastic beverage bottles are great to take to work, on errands or just about anywhere. They are also among the most readily recycled plastics. In 2006, plastic bottle recycling reached a record high of more than 2.2 billion pounds in the United States, with an overall plastic bottle recycling rate of roughly 24 percent. While this is all good news, there is a tremendous opportunity to recycle even more – namely, the remaining 76 percent of plastic bottles used in this country annually.

Why Recycle?

When it comes to resource conservation, recycling is one area where consumers can make a big difference. Before you pitch that empty water bottle into the trash, consider this:

- Every ton of plastic bottles recycled saves about 3.8 barrels of oil.
- Recycled plastic bottles are used to make hundreds of everyday products, ranging from fleece jackets and carpeting to detergent bottles and lumber for outdoor decking.
- Over 80 percent of U.S. households have access to a plastics recycling program, be it curbside collection or community drop-off centers, yet, in most areas, the demand for recycled plastics exceeds the available supply.
- In recent years, the number of U.S. plastics recycling businesses has nearly tripled. Today, more than 1,600 businesses are involved in recycling post-consumer plastics.

Recycling Tips for Consumers

At home or on-the-go, the following tips can help your readers increase the number of plastic bottles they recycle.

Bottle Basics: A “bottle” is a container that has a neck or an opening that is smaller than its base. For recycling purposes, jars are considered bottles and are accepted in programs that collect bottles.

1) Find out which plastic bottles are accepted for recycling in your area.

Check online to find out which types of materials your community does and does not collect. Many programs collect plastic bottles made from PET (#1) and HDPE (#2), which together represent almost 96 percent of all plastic bottles produced in the United States. These include:

- Milk jugs
- Water, soft drink, juice and beer bottles
- Bottles from shampoo, toiletries, laundry detergent and other household cleaners
- Salad dressing, cooking oil and condiment bottles
- Food jars, such as peanut butter and mayonnaise



Some communities collect *all* plastic bottles. Recycling facilities may not be available in all areas, so check to see if plastics recycling is available in your community.

2) Empty, rinse and crush.

Rinse bottles and remove lids before tossing them in the bin. Unless your community specifically asks for them, lids and caps should be placed in the garbage, not the recycle bin. Labels are generally okay. Crush plastic bottles by carefully stepping on them so they take up less room in the bin.

3) Bring it to the bin.

Many beverages are consumed away from home so it's important to bring empty bottles back to the recycle bin. Here's how: When you're out and about, place the cap back on and temporarily store the empty bottle in your backpack or briefcase, or simply leave it in your car until you get home. This will prevent any residue from leaking out until you can properly recycle the bottle.

4) Pitch in beyond the kitchen.

While many recyclable bottles come from the kitchen, don't forget to check the bathrooms and laundry room for shampoo and detergent bottles.

5) When in doubt, leave it out.

In addition to bottles, a growing number of communities are collecting and recycling plastic containers, such as tubs, trays and lids. But keep in mind that mixing the wrong types of materials (even other plastics) can lower the quality of the recycled material. So unless your community specifically asks for plastics other than bottles, please put only bottles into the recycling bin.

Keep these items out of the recycle bin unless your community specifically requests them:

- No automotive, pesticide or solvent bottles
- No lids or spray pumps
- No toys
- No trays, tubs or containers
- No plastic bags or film

For more information, please visit www.plasticsresource.com.

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