



Tip Sheet

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PLASTICS RECYCLING DURING THE HOLIDAYS AND YEAR-ROUND

While it may be daunting to think about adding anything to your holiday “to do” list, recycling can be refreshingly easy! These simple steps can help your readers to reuse and recycle more plastic bottles and bags during the holidays and throughout the year.

1. **Find out which plastics are accepted for recycling in your area and where they can be taken.** Though recycling varies throughout the country, most community programs collect plastic bottles, and many grocery and retail chains offer bins for recycling used plastic bags.

Bottles: Today, more than 80 percent of U.S. households have access to a recycling program, and the vast majority of them collect plastic bottles. For recycling purposes, a bottle is any container with a neck or an opening that’s smaller than its base. Include the following wherever plastic bottles are recycled:

- 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

Bags: Many grocery and retail stores now offer plastic bag drop-off programs that allow consumers to return their used bags and product wraps to be recycled at collection areas located at the front entrance or near the store checkout. All clean bags labeled #2 (HDPE) or #4 (LLDPE) are recyclable, including:

- Grocery bags
- Retail bags (remove hard plastic or string handles)
- Plastic newspaper bags
- Dry cleaning bags (remove paper and hangers)
- Bread bags (with crumbs shaken out)
- You can also include plastic wraps from products such as paper towels, bathroom paper, napkins and diapers wherever plastic bags are collected for recycling

Visit www.plasticbagrecycling.org for a list of stores that offer plastic bag recycling in your state.

2. **Clean and empty.** Before tossing bottles in the recycle bin, make sure they are rinsed and that caps are removed. Unless your community specifically asks for them, bottle caps should be placed in the garbage, not the recycle bin. Similarly, bags should be clean and empty. Do not include plastic food wrap, bags that have had direct contact with food, or material that has been painted or glued (other than the inks on the bag).



3. **Bring them back to the bin.** Many bottles and bags are used away from home so it's important to bring them back to the recycle bin. Here's how: When you're out and about, store them in a backpack or briefcase, or simply leave them in the car until they arrive home or at the grocery store. And don't forget to put the cap back on the bottles to prevent any residue from leaking out until you can properly recycle the bottle.
4. **Store bags in a bag.** Storing plastic bags and product wraps in a plastic bag offers neat, convenient storage. Simply knot the handles when you're ready to drop them off at your local grocer or retailer.
5. **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.
6. **Reuse those bags!** There are many helpful ways to reuse plastic bags, such as:
 - Wet umbrella cover – keep other items in your bag dry when your umbrella is wet
 - Suitcase savers – wrap shoes before packing them with clean clothes
 - Hand protectors – place them over your hands to handle messes indoors and out
 - Kitchen clean-up – place them under the cutting board for quick scrap removal
 - Trash can liners – use them in bathrooms and other household waste baskets
 - Doggie duty – bring them on dog walks to collect and dispose of pet waste
7. **When in doubt, leave it out.** In addition to bottles, a growing number of communities are collecting and recycling plastic containers, such yogurt cup, stubs, 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 accepts them:
 - No plastic bags or wraps (take them to your grocery store, if accepted)
 - No automotive, pesticide or solvent bottles
 - No lids or spray pumps
 - No toys
 - No trays, tubs or containers (unless your community asks for them. More and more communities are recycling these types of containers in addition to bottles, so it's worth checking.)
8. **Bridge the second generation gap.** It's important to remember that recycled plastics go on to become second generation products. Bottles are used to make hundreds of everyday items, ranging from fleece jackets and carpeting to detergent bottles and lumber for outdoor decking. Plastic bags can also be made into many products, including new bags, durable backyard decks, fencing, railing, park benches, picnic tables, and shopping carts.

For more information about plastic bottle recycling, please visit www.plasticsresource.com.
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