



(January 16, 2022) Reading Recycling Symbols

Not all plastics are created equal, some are generally easy to recycle and can be made into new items, others, however, are difficult and expensive to recycle. In this article we will identify the seven different plastic identification symbols, which of them are most commonly accepted through curbside and drop off programs, what products they are, and what they may be recycled into. Many types of packaging now include a how2recycle label that tells you what type of material it is and how to properly prepare it for recycling. Visit how2recycle.info for more information. Always check with your hauler or drop off center to see which type of plastics they currently accept.

Generally Accepted: Most recycling curbside and drop off facilities that accept plastic accept these types.

01 PET (Polyethylene terephthalate) - most soda and water bottles are made of this plastic, as well as some other plastic jars or containers for things like dressings or peanut butter. This plastic is the most recycled and can be recycled into new PET bottles, textiles, and construction materials.

02 HDPE (High-density polyethylene) - this type of plastic has more stiffness and strength than PET and is often used in items like milk jugs and toiletry bottles as well as grocery bags and water pipes. Plastic grocery bags should not be put in curbside recycling, instead return them to the store. HDPE plastics are the easiest plastic to recycle and are made into items such as non-food bottles, pipes, plastic lumber, tables and benches and other durable plastic products.

Sometimes Accepted: These plastics are sometimes accepted curbside and at drop off centers, check with your hauler or drop off center to confirm.

04 LDPE (Low-density polyethylene) - bread bags, frozen food bags, and most plastic shopping bags are made of this type of plastic. Plastic grocery bags should not be put in curbside recycling, instead return them to the store. When recycled, this plastic can be made into items like bin liners and packaging films.

05 PP (Polypropylene) - used for its strength and heat resistance, this type of plastic is used in microwaveable dishes, take out containers, yogurt and butter containers, and disposable dishes. It is often expensive and difficult to recycle this type of plastic. When recycled it can be made in items like plastic lumber, park benches, and auto parts.

Usually NOT Accepted: These types of plastic are especially hard and expensive to recycle and are almost never accepted curbside or at drop off centers. It's best to reduce or eliminate your use of these plastics and reuse what you already have.

03 PVC (Polyvinyl chloride) - also referred to as Vinyl, this plastic is often used for shampoo bottles and clear food packaging.

06 PS (Polystyrene) - commonly called Styrofoam, this plastic is used in many food and drink to-go containers as well as medicine bottles. There are programs that recycle Expanded Polystyrene (EPS), such as Dart Container which offers mail in and drop off throughout the country. Learn more at dartcontainer.com.



07 Other - often polycarbonate but could contain multiple types of plastics, this type of plastic can be made into items such as 3- and 5-gallon jugs, baby bottles, and CD's. There are also compostable plastics under this category that would include "PLA" or "Compostable" with the symbol.

When purchasing plastic products, look for the recycling symbol and how2recycle label to find out how recyclable it is. Reducing plastic use and choosing items that are easily recycled or made from recycled plastic is the greatest way to reduce plastic waste and pollution.