

Question from the County: Can I Recycle Bottle Caps and Lids?

Question: Which caps and lids are recyclable and which are not?

Picture this, you just finished off your EZ squeeze mayo, and the package says to recycle the bottle if clean and dry, but not the lid. Why not the lid, you wonder. And what about other caps and lids, like bottle caps, pumps, and spray bottles...are those recyclable?

Let's get to the bottom of this recycling mystery. First, check with your recycling company or drop-off center to see if they have specific rules about caps and lids.

As a general rule, plastic containers that have lids made of the same material, like the tubs for yogurt, sour cream, etc., should be recycled with their tops attached after you have cleaned and dried them. The same goes for plastic bottles and jugs with lids made of different types of plastic, like water bottles. But never recycle small caps solo, as they are too small and will fall through the cracks or get stuck in machines. When these small items get stuck in machines, they can damage them, sometimes even requiring them to be shut down and repaired.

Some caps and lids are made of different materials than their containers. Some may even have multiple components that make them difficult to recycle. For example, EZ squeeze tops have a silicone insert, and pumps and sprayers contain metal springs and various other pieces. Look for a how2recycle label to identify the materials and how to handle them. For more information on how to read those labels, visit how2recycle.info.

Clear and colored food and beverage glass jars and bottles are recyclable. The lids, caps, and corks may not be, but each trash company has its own rules. Republic customers should either put the lid back on the jar or throw it away. Other companies state if the lid is plastic or metal and larger than a milk jug cap, it can be put in the recycling bin. However, you should remove it from the container. If the lid is too small, it should be thrown away in the trash unless you can find a crafty way to reuse it. You can reuse glass containers for storage, crafts, or even homemade candles.

Always "know before you throw" and recycle responsibly by reading your recycling company or drop-off centers' guidelines. "Wishcycling," or putting stuff in your bin without knowing for sure that it is recyclable, is the number-one reason some recycling loads are rejected and go to the landfill. A lot of people wishcycle on accident just because they want to be able to recycle everything. When recycling loads have too many non-recyclable materials, that entire recycling load is no longer acceptable and has to be put in the landfill instead.

As with many recycling questions, what to do with caps and lids is complicated. The answers can vary between companies and recycling centers, so it's always best to check their guidelines. It may feel overwhelming, but as with anything, practice makes better. Before you know it, recycling will be second nature.