

How to Reduce the Amount of Trash in Your Bin

Driving around on trash day, I can't help but notice how many trash cans are overflowing. Despite being picked up weekly, families still struggle to close the lids on their trash bins. Why? Approximately 70% of that trash bin could be reduced, recycled, or composted.

Here are a few ways to minimize your waste:

Recycle: According to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), 40% of what is thrown away is considered standard recycling. You could free up nearly half of your trash bin by recycling your cardboard, paper, glass, plastic, and metal alone!

Compost: Composting is a great way to reduce the amount of food you throw away. Not only will your bin be lighter, but it will also smell better. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 30% of the contents of your bin could be composted. You can compost at home in the backyard, inside with worms, or drop off yard waste at a collection site.

Use Reusable Containers and Avoid Single-Use Items: Instead of disposable single-use items and containers, try reusable ones. Reusable water bottles, coffee mugs, and shopping bags are great alternatives to single-use. Opt for reusable or biodegradable alternatives instead of single-use straws, utensils, and plastic bags. Buying in bulk can also reduce the amount of packaging waste you generate.

By implementing these small changes, you can significantly reduce the amount of trash in your bin. You can do a waste audit at home by sorting through your trash bin to see what could be reduced, recycled, or composted. Sort the materials into piles of recyclables, compostables, and things you could have avoided for a good visual of just how much space you could save in your bin, not to mention the landfill.

Always check with your hauler or local recycling drop-off center to see what materials they accept. Find a drop-off site or hauler in your area at www.barrycountyrecycles.org.

Rachel Frantz serves as Barry County's Recycling Coordinator and writes columns to answer commonly asked recycling questions. Have a question about recycling or a topic idea for this column? We want to hear from you! Email recycle@barrycounty.org or visit www.barrycountyrecycles.org for more information and to get all your recycling questions answered.