

# PROPER RECYCLING RECYCLING RIGHT!

A Guide to doing it right in Lawrence and Mercer Counties.



**1. Always check with your recycling hauler if you have questions about your program.**

**2. There may be differences between programs depending on where you live.**

What to toss into your recycling bin can be confusing. It is important that residents and businesses follow the rules, policies, and guidelines established for their local programs.

## What Can I Recycle?

Always check with your recycling hauler or municipality about what can be recycled in your program. What may be acceptable for one municipality, may be different for a neighboring municipality. In general, most programs accept:

- #1 & #2 Plastic Bottles,
- Metal Cans (Aluminium, Steel, and Bi-metal), and
- Clean Paper (Cardboard, Magazines, Newspaper).

Some programs may accept:

- Junk Mail
- Glass Bottles and Jars

Plastic is the most confusing material because it comes in a variety of forms and resins that are chemically different. People often think that because something is "plastic" that it is recyclable. This is not the case. The same holds true with the "recycling" symbol and number commonly found on plastic items. The purpose of the symbol and number is to indicate the resin type. It has nothing to do with recycling!

Instead, focus on the shape of item. When it comes to recycling, think "plastic bottles/jugs, metal cans, and clean paper." If you're holding a plastic item, consider if it is a bottle. For example, butter tubs, yogurt containers, and clam-shell/take-out food containers are plastic and usually have a recycling symbol and number on them. But—they are not a bottle/jug and belong in the trash. When in doubt, throw it out.

## "Wishcycling" and Contamination

Contamination occurs when people put trash/unacceptable materials into the recycling program. "Wishcycling" occurs when people mean well, but unintentionally hurt recycling programs by placing the wrong materials into their bins. Examples include plastic toys, food containers, tubing, or buckets. These and similar items put into recycling bins must be physically removed and then landfilled. It is estimated that up to 20% of the cost of recycling is used to deal with items that should have been placed in the trash. Items that are not listed as recyclable WILL NOT get recycled. This includes plastic bags.

## Preparation

A simple rinse of food/beverage bottles and jugs is all that is needed. Cardboard should be flattened and mixed papers (magazines, junk mail, newspapers) can be placed in your bin loosely or in a brown paper bag. Do not put any materials in plastic bags! Plastic bags must be ripped open. And loose bags jam conveyor belts and gears. They are a significant cost to manage when they get into the system. Plastic bags will not get recycled at the recycling center. Many local grocers accept plastic bags for recycling. Greasy pizza boxes and other food contaminated materials belong in the trash. Residents committed to recycling may rip off and recycle a clean lid, while placing the dirty bottom in their trash.

 [www.mercercountypa.gov/recycling](http://www.mercercountypa.gov/recycling)

[www.lawrencecountypa.gov/recycling](http://www.lawrencecountypa.gov/recycling)

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