

Recycling plastic waste

Find out why recycling plastic is so important and what you can do to reduce, reuse and recycle plastic waste at home

We love plastic

Plastic is an amazing material, but households in the UK get through about 1.2 million tonnes of plastic packaging every year¹! That's 20 times more plastic than we used 50 years ago². Look around the home and you'll find plastic everywhere: in your computer, toys, even your clothes.



Do you recycle it?

Recycling plastic is the next best thing after reusing it. It keeps it out of landfill and means fewer resources are used to make new plastic. This is because plastic is made from oil or natural gas, two types of fossil fuel. So the more new plastic we have to create, the quicker we're using up the Earth's natural resources – and emitting greenhouse gas emissions in doing so.

How do you dispose of plastic?

Most plastic waste comes from plastic packaging. As a nation, we only recycle 19% of mixed plastics packaging³ (things like yoghurt pots, margarine tubs, plastic bags and plastic wrapping). We're better at recycling plastic bottles: recycling 58% of the 541,620 tonnes of plastic bottles we consume every day – but that still means just under half are going in the bin⁴!

Do you reuse it?

Reusing plastic – whether a drinks bottle, plastic toy or plastic bag – keeps it out of landfill and saves energy used in recycling plastic.

What's made from recycled plastic?

- ▶ Polyethylene bin liners and carrier bags
- ▶ Plastic bottles
- ▶ Flooring and window frames
- ▶ Building insulation board
- ▶ Fencing and garden furniture
- ▶ Video and CD cassette cases
- ▶ Water butts, garden sheds and composters
- ▶ Seed trays
- ▶ Fleeces
- ▶ Fibre filling for sleeping bags and duvets
- ▶ Office accessories

Source: www.recap.co.uk

Do you bin it?

When you put your plastic in the bin, it's usually sent to a landfill site to be buried in the ground (in some cases it may be burnt, but the ash still ends up in landfill). The problem with binning your waste is that plastic doesn't degrade quickly: it can take hundreds of years to break down in landfill. This means most plastic ever invented is probably still in existence somewhere!

The other problem is that landfill isn't a sustainable solution for disposing of our waste. Once UK landfill sites are full, where do you think we'll put our rubbish then?

Turn to page 2 for simple ideas to reduce, reuse and recycle plastics

Sources: ^{1,3,4}UK Households Plastics Collection Survey, 2013, Recap; www.recap.org/p/131/uk-households-plastics-collection-survey; ²Recyclenow; www.recyclenow.com/how_is_it_recycled/plastic_bottles.html

Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle

Try one of these smart ideas to cut back on plastic waste

REDUCE

- ▶ Check if the items you buy come in alternatives to plastic (e.g. glass or paper). Both glass and paper are easier to recycle than plastic.
- ▶ Opt for a tote bag or 'bag for life' instead of plastic bags – especially as you'll often be charged in some shops for plastic bags now.
- ▶ Carry a reusable drinks bottle that you fill up at home with tap water, rather than buying bottled water when out.
- ▶ Use Tupperware or reusable sandwich boxes instead of plastic film for packed lunches.

REUSE

- ▶ Reuse your plastic bags until they break – then why not use the plastic to protect your bike seat from the rain?
- ▶ Use old plastic bottles in the garden: as 'cloches' for small plants, flower pots for seedlings, vertical gardens or even creating a greenhouse!
- ▶ Coloured plastic can be cut up and used in kids' art and craft projects. String plastic bottle tops together to make kids' jewellery.

RECYCLE

- ▶ Check what you can recycle on your doorstep at www.recyclenow.com.
- ▶ You can also find your nearest recycling centre that takes plastics at www.recyclenow.com
- ▶ Most supermarkets have some recycling bins in their car parks – get into the habit of taking your recycling with you whenever you shop.
- ▶ Look for recycling bins next to rubbish bins when you're out and about. Or take your plastic bottles home to recycle.
- ▶ Don't forget to look upstairs for any plastic you can recycle (such as old shampoo or bubble bath bottles).

Some of the most commonly recycled plastic types

Look for these labels on your plastics as they denote plastic packaging that can usually be recycled easily:



One of the most common symbols seen on plastic bottles, PET is used for a lot of soft drinks.



An equally popular plastic, HDPE is used to make milk bottles or coloured plastics (like shampoo bottles).

Find out how many plastic bottles your family recycles with the **Bottle Stoppers Time Machine** and make a pledge with your family to waste less at www.jointhepod.org/wastepledge