

Which Plastics are Recyclable? Why?

Recycling plastics can be confusing. The chasing arrows (or triangle) with a number in the center is a code that identifies the plastic resin type. This code is used by plastics manufacturers but it **DOES NOT** necessarily mean the plastic is recyclable.

Seven basic resin types are used to make thousands of different kinds of plastics. Dyes and other additives are added to the basic resin to give the final product a desired color, shape, and texture. These additives, along with the way that plastics are formed, impact the ability to recycle the plastic. Recycled plastics must be carefully sorted by type before they can be melted down and reformed into new products. Placing your plastics in the recycling bin is just the beginning of the long process of sorting and reprocessing in order to recycle plastics.

Recycling companies collect the plastic types that have sufficient market value to cover the costs of collection, processing, and transportation to markets. In Western Massachusetts, most plastic bottles and containers meet these criteria.

Some plastics that can't be recycled, such as polystyrene (Styrofoam) and plastic bags, have limited markets and present haulers and processors with logistical challenges. Wind easily blows these lightweight plastics, creating litter problems; they require large amounts of storage space; and they get tangled up in processing equipment.

Plastic larger than two gallons in size can not be recycled because they do not fit through the processing equipment at the recycling facility. Small plastic pill bottles on the other hand, are too small to be recycled and fall through the processing equipment, potentially damaging the equipment and creating a safety hazard.

DO recycle these kinds of empty plastic bottles and containers	DO NOT recycle these kinds of plastics
Milk, water, and soda bottles	Styrofoam
Juice bottles	Plastic or Styrofoam egg cartons
Cooking oil bottles	Meat, cheese, deli, or cookie trays
Syrup, ketchup, other condiments	Microwave trays or containers
Peanut butter jars	Packing peanuts or blocks
Margarine and butter tubs	Plastic bags, wrap, packaging, or cling wrap
Yogurt containers	Medical supplies
Liquid dish soap	Plastic swimming pools, lawn furniture
Household cleaner bottles	Flower pots or plant pots
Shampoo and conditioner	Black plastic
Mouthwash	Toys
Vitamin bottles	Plastic coat hangers
Liquid laundry detergent	Plastic from electronics or appliances
Bleach	Pails, buckets, clothes hampers, or recycling bins
Liquid fabric softener	CDs, video tapes, cassettes, or cases
Soft drinks/sports drinks/water bottles	
Berry cartons (clamshells)	Motor oil, automotive products, poison, pesticides, solvents, adhesive, paint, or other chemicals