

A Guide To Recycling Codes On Plastic Containers

Not all plastics are the same. That's why there's a number code on the bottom for recycling.

Below is a breakdown on the plastic recycling codes, including what types of products are usually produced with that plastic in its first life, how to recycle it, and what it can be recycled into for its second life.

Number 1 Plastics – PET or PETE (Polyethylene Terephthalate)



1st Life: Soda, water and beer bottles; mouthwash bottles; peanut butter containers; salad dressing and vegetable oil containers; etc.

Recycling: Picked up through most curbside recycling programs.

2nd Life: Polar fleece fiber, tote bags, furniture, carpet, paneling, and occasionally made into new plastic containers

Number 2 Plastics – HDPE (High Density Polyethylene)



1st Life: Milk jugs, juice bottles; bleach, detergent and household cleaner bottles; shampoo bottles; some trash and shopping bags; motor oil bottles; cereal box liners; etc.

Recycling: Picked up through most curbside recycling programs.

2nd Life: Detergent bottles, recycling containers, floor tile, drainage pipe, benches, picnic tables, fencing

Number 3 Plastics – PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride)



1st Life: Window cleaner and detergent bottles, shampoo bottles, clear food packaging, wire jacketing, medical equipment, siding, windows, piping; etc.

Recycling: Rarely recycled because collecting it for recycling is cost-prohibitive. There are not enough items made from the material to warrant factories to recycle it into new products; however some plastic lumber makers will now accept it.

2nd Life: Decks, paneling, mud flaps, roadway gutters, flooring, cables, speed bumps, mats

Number 4 Plastics – LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene)



1st Life: Squeezable bottles; bread, dry cleaning and shopping bags; tote bags; carpet; etc.

Recycling: Rarely picked up through curbside programs, however some stores will accept plastic shopping bags for recycling.

2nd Life: Trash can liners and cans, compost bins, shipping envelopes, paneling, lumber, floor tile

Number 5 Plastics – PP (Polypropylene)



1st Life: Syrup bottles, ketchup bottles, caps, straws, medicine bottles, diapers; etc.

Recycling: Picked up through most curbside recycling programs.

2nd Life: Battery cables, brooms, brushes, auto battery cases, ice scrapers, landscape borders, bicycle racks, rakes, bins

Number 6 Plastics – PS (Polystyrene)



1st Life: Disposable plates and cups, meat trays, egg cartons, carry-out containers, aspirin bottles, compact disc cases; etc.

Recycling: Picked up through some curbside recycling programs.

2nd Life: Insulation, light switch plates, egg cartons, vents, rulers, foam packing, carry-out containers

Number 7 Plastics – Other



1st Life: 3 and 5 gallon water bottles, 'bullet-proof' materials, sunglasses, DVDs, iPod and computer cases, signs and displays, nylon; etc.

Recycling: Not traditionally recycled, however some curbside programs now take them.

2nd Life: Plastic lumber, custom-made products