

THE OLD
FARMER'S ALMANAC
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IF YOU MUST USE PLASTICS:

WHICH PLASTICS ARE RECYCLABLE BY NUMBER?

PLASTICS RECYCLING CHART

By The Editors

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This plastics identification chart should make recycling and sorting your plastic a little easier. It also shows some of the common plastic items in a home that are likely to leak chemicals into our food and bodies, so that you know which plastics are safe and which to avoid. Please feel free to print and share.

If you look at the number inside the triangle on your plastic, it will range from one to seven. This will tell you both the type of plastic used and which type is recyclable or even reusable. Many plastic-based products cannot break down and cannot be recycled.

Most plastic that displays a one or a two number is recyclable (though you need to check with your area's recycling provider). But plastic that displays a three or a five often isn't recyclable. A three indicates that the water bottle has been made from

polyvinyl chloride, a five means that it's been made of polypropylene, two materials that are not accepted by most public recycling centers.

PLASTICS IDENTIFICATION AND RECYCLING CHART

Here are the seven standard classifications for plastics, and the recycling and reuse information for each type. See more information below this chart.

Here's more information about the different types of plastics.

#1: PET (POLYETHYLENE TEREPHTHALATE)

Water bottles and plastic soda bottles are the most common containers made out of PET. It's fine to recycle.

However, avoid reusing. Why not reuse? PET is meant for single-use applications; repeated use increases the risk of leaching and bacterial growth. And it's very difficult to clean or remove harmful chemicals. PET may leach carcinogens.

#2: HDPE (HIGH-DENSITY POLYETHYLENE)

Most milk jugs, detergent containers, and oil bottles are made from HDPE. It's a very common plastic and one of the safest to use. It's also fully recyclable.

#3: PVC (POLYVINYL CHLORIDE)

PVC is used for a lot of plastic food wrapping because it's soft and flexible. Most consumer recyclers will not take PVC products. Also, avoid reusing PVC products, especially when it comes to food or for children's use. They contain toxins which leach throughout its entire life cycle.

#4: LDPE (LOW-DENSITY POLYETHYLENE)

LDPE is usually what plastic bags are made from. You'll also find LDPE in shrink wraps, dry cleaner garment bags, and other items.

Though most plastic bags are not recyclable, some companies and recycling centers have found alternatives or are investigating how to recycle plastic bags given their harmfulness to the environment.

LDPE is reusable and safe to repurpose.

#5: PP (POLYPROPYLENE)

Polypropylene plastic is used in those margarine and yogurt containers, potato chip bags, cereal bags, and much more.

Polypropylene is recyclable though many recyclers still don't accept it; this should change in time. PP is considered safe for reuse.

Household

Plastics

■ In your quest to go green, use this guide to use and sort plastic. The number, usually found with a triangle symbol on a container, indicates the type of resin used to produce the plastic. Call **1-800-CLEANUP** for recycling information in your state.



Number 1 • PETE or PET (polyethylene terephthalate)

IS USED IN microwavable food trays; salad dressing, soft drink, water, and beer bottles

PETE STATUS hard to clean; absorbs bacteria and flavors; avoid reusing
IS RECYCLED TO MAKE . . carpet, furniture, new containers, Polar fleece



Number 2 • HDPE (high-density polyethylene)

IS USED IN household cleaner and shampoo bottles, milk jugs, yogurt tubs

HDPE STATUS transmits no known chemicals into food

IS RECYCLED TO MAKE . . detergent bottles, fencing, floor tiles, pens



Number 3 • V or PVC (vinyl)

IS USED IN cooking oil bottles, clear food packaging, mouthwash bottles

V STATUS is believed to contain phalates that interfere with hormonal development; avoid

IS RECYCLED TO MAKE . . cables, mudflaps, paneling, roadway gutters



Number 4 • LDPE (low-density polyethylene)

IS USED IN bread and shopping bags, carpet, clothing, furniture

LDPE STATUS transmits no known chemicals into food

IS RECYCLED TO MAKE . . envelopes, floor tiles, lumber, trash-can liners



Number 5 • PP (polypropylene)

IS USED IN ketchup bottles, medicine and syrup bottles, drinking straws

PP STATUS transmits no known chemicals into food

IS RECYCLED TO MAKE . . battery cables, brooms, ice scrapers, rakes



Number 6 • PS (polystyrene)

IS USED IN disposable cups and plates, egg cartons, take-out containers

PS STATUS is believed to leach styrene, a possible human carcinogen, into food; avoid

IS RECYCLED TO MAKE . . foam packaging, insulation, light switchplates, rulers



Number 7 • Other (miscellaneous)

IS USED IN 3- and 5-gallon water jugs, nylon, some food containers

OTHER STATUS contains bisphenol A, which has been linked to heart disease and obesity; avoid

Please AVOID!

IS RECYCLED TO MAKE . . . custom-made products

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#6: PS (POLYSTYRENE)

Avoid polystyrene as best possible. It's used for disposable styrofoam drinking cups, take-out containers, packing peanuts, and more.

Polystyrene is not generally recyclable and accounts for about 35% of US landfill material. Because it breaks apart so easily, it's also found ingested by marine animals and littering our beaches.

Also, avoid reusing! Chemicals present in polystyrene have been linked with human health and reproductive system dysfunction. Polystyrene may leach styrene, a possible human carcinogen, into food products (especially when heated in a microwave!).

#7: POLYCARBONATE, BPA, AND OTHER PLASTICS

Assume that nothing with the #7 number can be recycled or reused. BPA can leak chemicals. It's an xenoestrogen, a known endocrine disruptor.

Interested in recycling? [See some ideas on recycling and reusing in the home!](#)

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