

Recycling plastic



Plastics are durable, lightweight materials that were invented in 1909. They are normally made from oil and natural gas. Using plastics to replace packaging materials such as metal and glass has allowed manufacturers to make packages that are more efficient. For example to bottle eight gallons of a beverage would take only two pounds of plastic but would take three pounds of aluminum, eight pounds of steel and 27 pounds of glass. The light weight of plastic packaging helps reduce transportation costs. It takes fewer trucks to transport plastic compared to metal or other materials. Fewer trucks mean less fuel usage and therefore less air pollution from truck exhaust. Recycling plastic containers helps to conserve landfill space and natural resources and to cut down on pollution. Since the number of landfills continues to diminish, keeping plastic containers out of landfills is important. Plastics do not degrade in landfills. Therefore, containers you throw away will be taking up landfill space hundreds of years from now. Making plastic products from recycled plastic also reduces air and water pollution, and energy used for making plastics from raw materials. Recycled plastic is used to make products such as plastic lumber, toys, containers, carpet, fiber fill for jackets and flowerpots. There are over 1, 500 products made with or packaged in recycled plastic. Such uses reduce natural resource consumption and pollution because fewer raw materials are required and less energy is needed to make recycled plastic products than to make plastic products entirely from raw materials. There are different kinds mixtures of resins that make thousands of types of plastics. Ink pens, car parts and plastic bags are all made from different resins. In order to recycle plastics, the different types must be kept separate. Therefore, plastic packages are coded to indicate the type of resin used to make them. The code numbers

are found inside the chasing recycling arrows on the bottoms of containers. These numbers help you separate plastic containers for recycling collection or drop off. Uncoded plastics, such as plastic pipes, cannot be recycled but can be reused. Recycling is a six step process. First they must be cleaned and separated by the type of plastic and by color. The first step is the most important one in the process. Colored plastics cannot be mixed with clear plastics, and plastics with different code numbers cannot be mixed together. Mixing plastics can cause entire bales to be rejected and possibly to be sent to a landfill. They are then compacted and shipped off to the processing facility. Next they are shredded up into pieces and then melted together. Then they are molded back into new plastic products. Plastic containers must be rinsed, and lids and rings must be removed and thrown away. Removing lids and rings is critical, because they are made from different resins than the resins used to make containers. A few lids left on bottles or jugs can cause a bale of plastic to be rejected. Plastic is probably the most used product in world. There are thousands of different uses for plastic that are needed every single day. Every year more and more plastic products are being recycled. In 1995 Americans recycled only 9. 5% of there plastics. In 1996 Americans recycled 22. 1%of their plastic products. That 22. 1% was equal to 585, 000 tons of plastic bottles. Today almost 64% of Americans recycle their plastic products which is over a hundred millions tons of plastics bottles. More and more people each year are getting in to the habit of recycling. Why shouldn't we, it doesn't cost us anything to take our plastic products to the recycling center. We all must do our part to save the earth while we still can. Only we can save our earth and we only have one chance at it. Once we screw it up we can never go back.