



# WHAT IS RECYCLING?

Recycling is processing an item into either an identical or a completely new item. As an example, aluminum cans may be recycled into new aluminum cans or into siding materials for a residence. Recycling differs from reuse, which is to use the item in its original form for another use or the same use. Clothing taken to Goodwill or the Salvation Army store may be purchased by another person to reuse.

Recycling is a way of turning old stuff into new stuff, of changing used household materials we throw away into new products we buy and use. Lots of things we consider trash can be reprocessed into new products and used again: plastic bottles, newspapers, soft drink cans, jelly jars, and many more.

Texans of all ages can recycle - it helps clean up the environment and saves energy and valuable natural resources.

## WHAT IS TRASH?

When you throw out your trash, do you ever stop to think who will take care of it or where it goes? Since we don't see piles of paper, glass, cans, or plastic outside our front doors, most of us never think about what happens to it after it's picked up. The average Texan [throws out an average of 7.09 pounds of waste](#) per day.

Most trash gets hauled away to landfills where it's buried. To build a landfill, a huge hole is dug and then lined with clay or huge sheets of plastic. When a landfill is full of trash, layers of soil and clay seal it inside.

The trash in a landfill lasts a long time. Landfill excavations have discovered 35-year-old newspapers you can still read. Even after 20 years, an ear of corn and a hot dog are easily identifiable.

## WHY SHOULD WE RECYCLE?

- Recycling reduces toxic air emissions.
- Recycling reduces energy consumption.
- Recycling slows down the rate at which we fill landfills.
- Recycling conserves natural resources.

Recycling is important as a way to save energy, too. For example, recycling an aluminum can saves enough electricity to operate a TV for three hours. Most people agree that conserving natural resources, energy, and our land is the right thing to do - and recycling saves all of these! Much more of our household garbage could be recycled. Some recycling programs can keep as much as 35 percent of residential waste out of the landfill. However, recycling depends on consumer participation in recycling programs.

## WHAT CAN YOU RECYCLE?

Each community determines what items they will take in their recycling program based on available markets for the materials. No two communities are the same. Commonly accepted items are paper, aluminum, steel, certain plastics, and glass. Even grass and tree limbs may be recycled through the process of composting. To find out what recycling materials your community accepts, visit [Earth911.com](http://Earth911.com).



## HOW DO YOU PREPARE ITEMS FOR RECYCLING?

With a little practice, it takes less than five minutes a day. Sort materials, rinse any leftover contents from containers so your items won't begin to smell bad or attract ants and bees, and store in a safe, dry place. It's easy.

## HOW DOES TEXAS RECYCLE?

In some communities, curbside recycling is an option. In other communities, drop-off centers provide residents with a convenient place to recycle. Still others may offer semi-annual or annual drive-thru or drop-off site recycling events.

## TEXAS COMMUNITIES OFFER RECYCLING OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDING:

### **CURBSIDE PROGRAMS:**

Thousands of Texans place recyclables curbside for pickup at single-family homes and/or apartment complexes. Families who participate in their recycling program are typically able to recycle newspapers, office paper, magazines, glass bottles and jars, aluminum and steel cans, and plastic containers marked with a # 1 or # 2.

### **DROP-OFF CENTERS/NEIGHBORHOOD DEPOSITORIES:**

A drop off center is typically a manned or un-manned site where a variety of items may be deposited for recycling. Sites generally include large containers to place separated materials such as different bins for aluminum, glass, and paper. In some communities, the centers may also have containers for scrap metal, wood waste, and other large recyclables. The community may offer drive-thru facilities where employees or volunteers typically assist in unloading and sorting materials. The drive-thru may be opened for an annual or semi-annual event only or may be open certain hours each day or week.

### **HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE:**

A household hazardous waste collection day may be sponsored on annual or semi-annual basis. In a few communities on-going collections are available curbside, on a schedule or on-call basis, or a permanent drop-off facility. Antifreeze, used lead-acid batteries, fuel, oil, and paint thinner are just a few of the items that should not be disposed of in a landfill but saved for a household hazardous waste collection. Visit [Earth911.com](http://Earth911.com) for more information.

### **CHRISTMAS TREE RECYCLING:**

Drop-off or curbside collections of Christmas trees may substantially reduce the volume of waste during a high-volume waste time of the year. The mulch from the chopped-up trees is often used in city landscaping projects.

### **YARD TRIMMINGS/COMPOSTING:**

Every year, over one million tons of yard trimmings go into Texas landfills. The Texas Cooperative Extension's "Don't Bag It" program encourages citizens to leave their grass clippings on the lawn when they mow. As they sift to the ground, the clippings act as mulch that retains moisture, prevents erosion, and insulates against extreme temperatures. Backyard composting turns yard trimmings and vegetative food scraps into a valuable soil amendment for lawn and garden use. Some communities offer special curbside collection of yard trimmings for large-scale composting that sold or provided for free to businesses and individuals.