

6 COMMON RECYCLING MYTHS

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Myth: 1

Everything can only be recycled once...

Many everyday items such as cardboard, tin cans and glass can be recycled many times over, saving countless natural resources such as trees, water and energy.

For example the average piece of paper can now be recycled five to seven times before the tiny fibres get too degraded to be used as new paper. After this point they can still be made into lower-grade paper-based materials such as egg cartons or packaging inserts.

Whereas glass and metals, including aluminium, can be recycled indefinitely without a loss in quality.

Plastic, unfortunately, is one of the materials with a short recycling life. It can often be only recycled once or twice - the material is then downgraded into plastic pellets that can be recycled into clothing.



Myth: 2**Recycling takes more energy than making something new...**

Recycling paper and cardboard not only prevents further deforestation but it also reduces the amount of waste paper that ends up in landfill. Furthermore the paper manufacturing process produces more chemical pollution and requires more water and energy than paper created from recycled, shredded paper. For example one tonne of recycled paper saves 30,000 litres of water¹. Recycled paper and cardboard are almost 70% cheaper than producing the same volume of paper from newly cut trees.

Myth: 3**Plastic bags cannot be recycled...**

Plastic bags CAN be recycled! Whilst plastic bags are made from a soft plastic that cannot be recycled with other plastics, they can be disposed of in many supermarkets and local recycling centres. Ideally it is best to ditch the plastic bags altogether and choose a reusable shopping bag instead.

¹BBC Science Focus

Myth: 4 Recycling arrow means it is recyclable...

This can be confusing. See our explainer below for what the most common symbols on your packaging and products might mean for your recycling:



This symbol — known as the 'Mobius Loop' — means that the item/packaging COULD be recycled. It has the capability to be recycled but it doesn't mean it will or can be recycled- or that it has been recycled before.



Sometimes the arrows have a number in the middle which indicate the type of plastic resin used to make the product — if it's a 1 then it is widely recycled but the higher the number the less easily recycled it will be. Check with your local recycling centre for guidance.



This symbol does not mean the product is necessarily recyclable. It indicates that the manufacturers have made a financial contribution to recycling services in Europe.



The 'tidy man' symbol is part of the Keep Britain Tidy initiative. It doesn't have anything to do with recycling but acts as a reminder to dispose of your waste responsibly.



This symbol means a product is widely recycled across the UK with over 75% of local authorities collecting the packaging this label is applied to.



The white arrow on a black background means that it is likely to be recyclable in the UK but best to check with the local council first. Easy to do online.



The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) logo indicates wood-based products from well-managed forests independently certified in accordance with the rules of the FSC.



Myth: 5**Recycling is the only way to reduce waste...**

One of the biggest misconceptions about recycling is that the only way to reduce waste is to recycle. In fact, recycling is just one of the important steps we can take to reducing our waste both at home and at school.

Reuse and Repair – choose reusable items such as drinks and food containers rather than single-use disposable food wraps, shopping bags or plastic bottles. Repair damaged items such as clothes and toys rather than replacing them

Recycle – understand what your local council recycles and make sure you take a few simple steps to do it correctly

Reduce the Items You Use - many items we use are unnecessary and are single use items that ultimately end up in landfill polluting our environment

Food Composting is a great way to divert food waste from landfill and recycle it into nutrient rich compost

Myth: 6**All plastic can be recycled...**

Unfortunately not all plastics can be recycled. It is always best to check with your local recycling centre but generally most single use plastics cannot be recycled and should NOT be put into the recycling bin. This includes single-use drinks bottles, straws, plastic film (bubble wrap, cling film) and some types of take out containers. Instead try to avoid buying/using these items in the first place and only buy what you really need and what can be re-used or recycled.