

How to Set Up a Recycling System

Five easy steps to sorting, stacking, and stashing your household recycling.

1. Do Your Homework

Check with your local collection center, and find out what it accepts and rejects. Residents in some areas face fines for not recycling. (New York City residents, for example, face up to a \$500 ticket.) To find out what your municipality recycles, call 800-CLEANUP or visit recyclingcenters.org.

2. Study Your Trash

What you use most will determine the type and size of the containers you'll require. If your family drinks a lot of juices and soda, you'll want a larger bin for cans and bottles.

3. Create Convenience

Ideally, your home recycling center will be a two-part system one part for everyday disposal and the other for storing. The everyday part should be where you generate the most waste—for many, the kitchen. The spot should be as accessible as the trash can, perhaps right next to it. If you are short on space, consider hanging sturdy shopping bags on the inside of a pantry door. Sorting is a tiresome truth of recycling, so why do it twice? Get a divided container that lets you separate as you dispose. (Try the compartmentalized wicker bin from Waste-Not-Baskets; 16-inch basket, \$79, waste-not-basket.com.)

4. Pick a Storage Space

When your kitchen bins fill up, move their contents to a storage spot (separate from the household stamping grounds) until it's time to drop off at the curb or a center. Consider the garage, laundry room, mudroom, or utility closet. Containers should be easy to transport, so look for ones with wheels. If your community has return deposits on cans and bottles, separate them, too, for returns.

5. Post Recycling Guidelines

Learn how you should recycle phone books, metals, makeup, mirrors, and more. It's a good reminder for your family, and the quick reference makes recycling easier. Use a Magic Marker to write what goes where.

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