

recycle across america®

standardized labels for recycling bins ... simple solution - profound impact



Let's recycle right!®

A toolkit to help create a successful recycling program in your buildings.

5 STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE RECYCLING PROGRAM

1. Contact your hauler to find out what materials they will pick up and whether or not you can enclose materials in plastic bags or liners when placing them in the larger recycling dumpsters.



2. Choose bins that are durable and similar in look, shape, and size and keep the same color coordination throughout the program area. Bins should have lids that help designate what materials go in the bin as well as clear labeling.



Example of bin look and placement

Blue bin = recycling
Green bin = compost
Black bin = trash



3. Ensure that the labels are clearly visible on the lids of the bins as well as on the front of the bin. If you have only one label, choose to place it on the lid. This reduces further confusion and ensures that the correct material is visible and clear.



4. Make sure new bins have had time to 'breathe' and old bins are clean and dry before placing your new labels.



5. Educate and empower your custodial staff. Make sure they:
 - a. Know whether or not liners and plastic bags can be used.
 - b. Return bins to their proper position and never switch bin placements in the physical space and in relation to other bins.
 - c. Report any signs of contamination

recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this toolkit is to educate, inform, and enable your business to have the most successful and profitable recycling program possible. It is important to ensure you are not only engaging in the act of recycling, but recycling right! From knowing how to speak to your hauler to find out what materials you can recycle (and how) to knowing what labels to use, on what kinds of bins, and where to place them, this toolkit helps walk you through the processes of starting your program.

Here are other businesses like yours that are helping their employees, customers, patrons, students, and visitors recycle right wherever they are.



TESTIMONIALS

Here's what a few of our major supporters have to say:



"Having the standardized labeling system from Recycle Across America is eliminating employee confusion, increasing our recycling levels and reducing the contamination in our recycling bins across our film and TV production operations in North America. Our recycling hauler of our corporate offices says they've never seen such clean capture. Recycle Across America is offering wonderful, workable solutions." - Shannon Bart, Sustainable Production Manager



"We set out to do a focus group with over 1,000 consumers in the U.S. to compare the efficacy and appeal of Recycle Across America's standardized labels against Rubbermaid's newly designed labels and other recycling labels in the marketplace, and Recycle Across America's standardized labels were chosen over all the other labels for efficacy, comprehensive design and appeal." Katie Abbott – Manager Recycling Bin Services U.S. Market



"Recycle Across America provides free standardized labels to K-12 schools throughout the U.S. Since using the standardized labels on our recycling bins, our recycling amounts have gone up so dramatically and the materials captured are so clean, that we saved approximately \$200,000 in landfill fees in the first year since using the labels!" – Janet Whited, Waste Management Director, SDU



"The GSNN would like to thank Recycle Across America for developing national standardized labels for recycling bins for schools. Your program is an essential element that will advance the national green and healthy school movement. Recycle Across America will assist all of our future generations to develop lifestyle habits that will ensure a sustainable world." – Jim McGrath, President

recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

The New York Times

"Recycle Across America's standardized label initiative is one of the most important environmental fixes taking root today"



"Implementing solutions to make it easier for the general public to recycle 'properly' needs to be our number one focus if we want to increase recycling rates. Comprehensive and universal labels are critical to advancing recycling in the U.S. Now is the time to put national standardized labels in place." – Mark



"Our recycling levels have doubled in the schools where we are using the standardized labels. We're now beginning to use the labels in all of our schools throughout our district." – Cully Nordby, Recycling Coordinator CCUSD



"Get on the bandwagon with Recycle Across America ... Widespread use of these labels will be a spark plug to help increase the nation's recycling rates." – Bruce Parker, President



The standardized labels have been deemed "a world changing solution" by Ashoka Innovators for the Public



Also, our celebrity campaign, *Let's Recycle Right!* has been featured in Coco Eco magazine, the first of its kind to dedicate the entire cover-to-cover space to sustainable living, traveling, cosmetics, products, and stories about world changing leaders, actions, and solutions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

5 STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE RECYCLING PROGRAM.....	2
PURPOSE	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS	6
WHY SHOULD I RECYCLE?	7
IS RECYCLING WORTH IT? YES,	7
SAVE MONEY WHILE SAVING RESOURCES	7
WHAT SHOULD I RECYCLE?.....	8
QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HAULER.....	8
RECYCLE EVERYTHING RECYCLABLE.....	9
BUY RECYCLED AND WORK TOWARD REDUCING WASTE.....	9
CHOOSING COMPOSTABLE PRODUCTS	10
HOW SHOULD I RECYCLE?	11
OFFICE BIN RECOMMENDATIONS (FOR NON-LUXURY SPACES)	11
AVOID BINS THAT HAVE IMPEDING MODELED RIDGES.....	11
PROPER LIDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE.....	12
LINERS	13
PLASTIC BAGS	13
BIN PLACEMENT.....	13
PREPARE YOUR BINS PROPERLY BEFORE ADHERING LABELS.....	14
STANDARDIZED LABELS	15
EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL BINS AND LIDS	16
EXAMPLES OF CONFUSING BINS AND LABELS	16
HOW DO I COMMUNICATE MY RECYCLING PROGRAM?	17
CUSTODIAL STAFF.....	17
LET'S RECYCLE RIGHT	17
POSTERS AND BANNERS.....	18
DO'S AND DON'TS.....	19
HOW DO I MEASURE MY PROGRESS?	20
RESEARCH THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF RECYCLING IN YOUR COMMUNITY	20
MONITOR YOUR RECYCLING FOR MONEY.....	20
SHARE YOUR STORY WITH US!	21
GLOSSARY	22
ADDITIONAL MATERIALS	23
VIDEOS.....	23
ARTICLES	23

WHY SHOULD I RECYCLE?

IS RECYCLING WORTH IT? YES,

If society is *recycling right* it is absolutely worth it! Currently less than 35% of households and less than 10% of businesses in the U.S. recycle (EPA 2011). When the U.S. reaches recycling levels of 75%, it will be the CO2 equivalent of removing 50 million cars from U.S. roads each year and it will generate 1.5 million new jobs. Manufacturers will be able to reuse the materials and it will slow down the depletion of finite natural resources.



Manufacturers need these valuable materials, but without the costly 'contamination'!

Did you know...publicly traded companies are receiving billions of dollars of pressure from shareholders to use recycled content in manufacturing.

SAVE MONEY WHILE SAVING RESOURCES

Businesses and schools can save thousands of dollars (net) by increasing their recycling and decreasing their trash hauling. For instance, San Diego Unified School District saved approximately \$200,000 in trash dumpster and trash hauling fees within one school year after implementing the standardized label program because they increased their recycling levels so dramatically. With that being said, featured in this documents are some critical next steps to help you have a successful recycling program within your organization.

WHAT SHOULD I RECYCLE?

Each state, county, city, and business is unique in what they are allowed to recycle. The first step to understanding what and how you can recycle in your business is forming a relationship with your trash and recycling haulers. The haulers are companies like Waste Management, Republic Services, or any local waste pick-up provider in your area.



When beginning your program you will need to sign a contract with a hauler. This contract dictates the size of the bin they will provide, the materials they will collect, and the frequency of collection. Below is a checklist of questions you should ask your hauler.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HAULER

- ☐ What types of materials can I recycle?
- ☐ How should the materials be sorted? For instance should paper and cardboard be put in a separate bin or does the recycling hauler want all of the recycling to be put in the same bin (aka Mixed aka Single Stream Recycling)?
- ☐ Does the recycling hauler want us to keep all of the recycling in plastic bags? In other words, when dumping material into the dumpster, can the material be kept in the plastic bags/liners or should the materials be emptied into the dumpster without using any plastic bags? *

*In some cases, organizations are finding out that if their recycling is in plastic bags/liners and then thrown into the recycling dumpster, that the full bags of recycling are being sent directly to the **landfill**.

PRO TIP

As a rule of thumb, we advise against the use of plastic bags since most recycling haulers do not want to plastic bags brought into their recycling processing plants. Plastic bags often jam their sorting equipment and can cause injuries to their staff as they try to unjam the equipment.

recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

RECYCLE EVERYTHING RECYCLABLE



Have recycling drives for all types of materials such as cell phones, batteries, CFL light bulbs, ink cartridges, plastic bags, paint and hazardous materials. You can contact your local city and county government offices to learn where you can recycle these materials.

With companies such as www.TerraCycle.com you can recycle materials that aren't usually considered 'recyclable' such as candy wrappers, toothbrushes, glue sticks, flip-flop sandals, etc. and you can even generate money for your organization by having these types of recycling drives with TerraCycle.



BUY RECYCLED AND WORK TOWARD REDUCING WASTE

Always look for opportunities to "close the loop" by purchasing products that are made from recycle materials, such as: paper products, clothing, uniforms, furniture, carpeting, ink cartridges, construction materials, etc. Support manufacturers that are using recycled materials. Recycling is only half of the equation. Buying products made of recycled materials is the other half. And above all, always look for ways to reduce waste to save resources and money. Resources are precious and limitless.



PRO TIP

If your organization is generating considerable amounts of cardboard, office paper, aluminum cans, and other materials, you might be able to sell your recyclables directly to a processor and make money!

recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

CHOOSING COMPOSTABLE PRODUCTS



Composting your organization's food waste and compostable products can save your organization money by diverting significant amounts of material away from landfills while providing nutrient soil supplements to farmers (or your own garden). Remember to always use 'well marked' 100% compostable liners in your bins and keep your compost bins conveniently placed alongside your recycling bin and trash bin in food service areas. If you offer compostable dishware and serving-ware, make certain that each product is well marked as compostable.



PRO TIP

Do not mix and match ... in other words do not offer some products that are compostable and other products that aren't compostable. Commit to fully compostable products or no compostable products - because having compostable products accidentally mixed in with traditional recyclables is very problematic for the recycling processors and having traditional plastics going into the compostables bin is equally problematic for the composter.

HOW SHOULD I RECYCLE?



Recycling doesn't have to be confusing. By following our advice for choosing bins, lids, and labels you can ensure that your recycling program is easy to understand for everyone. Standardized labels help clients, employees, custodial staff, and everyone recycle right throughout your business.

OFFICE BIN RECOMMENDATIONS (FOR NON-LUXURY SPACES)



For desk side recycling, we recommend small bins. Small blue and black bins come in various sizes. For example, [Global Industrial](#) offers between 28-41qt sizes.

AVOID BINS THAT HAVE IMPEDING MODELED RIDGES

We recommend tall blue recycling bins in common areas. However, we do not recommend any recycling bins that have uneven texture and molded designs because it makes it difficult to apply labels. Avoid bins such as these, because it is difficult to put labels on the sides and on the front - which should always be an option. For these two bin styles, the arrows indicate the areas where the labels cannot stick due to impeding ridges and molding.



BINS WITH SMOOTH SIDES ARE BEST



These are examples of bins that are of a similar height and style to the Slim Jim. Labels can easily stick onto the sides of these bins ensuring a clear view of the labels from all angles. Make sure to include a bin for trash and locate it directly next to the recycling bin. Sites like [Webstaurant Store](#) sell these styles.

PROPER LIDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Choose a lid that works with your program – it makes a difference in human behavior, especially when you use the standardized labels. In this case we are showing a lid that is designed for Mixed Recycling because it indicates you can put round cans and bottles in it and you can put long flat paper and cardboard in it.

Mixed Recycling	Paper/Cardboard Recycling	Cans & Bottles Recycling
		

We have a standardized label designed for this lid (as shown) and for nearly every other lid that represents other sorting needs. Ensuring proper lid structure and labeling increases the likelihood that the proper materials will end up in the bin. This is a very important element to the success of your recycling program.

recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

LINERS



If you compost or send your food to farms, choose a green bin and use bin liners (bags) that are clearly marked "100% compostable". Even if you aren't composting, consider using compostable liners because they are manufactured without petroleum products and are likely to decompose more quickly.

PLASTIC BAGS

Do not keep your recycling in plastic bags when you put your recyclables in the recycling dumpster or recycling bins. Please put your recyclables loose in the recycling dumpster (without plastic bags). Plastic bags create problems for the recycling sorting equipment, can jam the machinery and can cause injuries to employees at recycling facilities. Either don't use plastic bags, or if your plastic bags are clean and dry, recycle them at a facility or retailer that accepts plastic bag recycling, specifically. Otherwise, throw the empty used plastic bags in the trash dumpster.



BIN PLACEMENT



ALWAYS keep trash bins, recycling bins, and if applicable compost bins, side by side. Whenever possible, have a recycling bin with every trash bin and mark your bins well with the standardized labels (labels on the top and sides). In food areas such as cafeterias and restaurants, provide a way for people to empty their beverages before they put them in the recycling bins.

PREPARE YOUR BINS PROPERLY BEFORE ADHERING LABELS

If you've purchased new bins or carts, ALWAYS make sure you allow enough time for the new bin or cart plastic to *breathe*. New plastics release gases or fumes and it is a good idea to allow your carts and bins to "off-gas" for a few days before you apply stickers to the plastic to ensure that they adhere well. For a new or old bin or cart, always clean off the surface with a to remove oils, dust, dirt and other things that can interfere with the labels sticking properly to the plastic. And make sure the surface is dry. As an added assurance, wipe the surface of the bin or cart where you want to place the sticker with rubbing alcohol and allow to dry before applying the labels.

ROLLAWAY CARTS NEED SMOOTH LABEL-FRIENDLY SURFACES

When choosing a rollaway cart, also pay attention to the surfaces of the bins to make sure that they accommodate for labels to be adhere smoothly. For instance in this example, there is a great spot on the lid right up front to place a 4x9 standardized label. And on the sides and the front of the bin, there is enough space to use an 8.5x11 standardized label on the front (covering up the embossed chasing arrow with the label is fine), and on the sides where it is smooth and without ridges.



recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

STANDARDIZED LABELS

A society-wide standardized labeling system has been created for recycling bins through the non-profit organization Recycle Across America®. Imagine the impact when students and the public begin seeing consistent labeling throughout society. The standardized labels have proven to increase recycling levels more than 50% and significantly reduce the amount of trash that historically has been thrown in recycling bins as a result of confusing labels.



PRO TIP

There is a standardized label designed for nearly every sorting requirement in the U.S. Choose the standardized label(s) that suit your sorting needs at RecycleAcrossAmerica.org.

recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL BINS AND LIDS



Top Left: Standardized label on a Rubbermaid container lid.

Top Right: Standardized labels on bins at Best Buy headquarters.

Bottom Left: Standardized labels on bins at LaGuardia Airport.

EXAMPLES OF CONFUSING BINS AND LABELS



When recycling is presented haphazardly like the **photos to the right** it is hard for the public to believe that their materials are actually going to a recycling facility and not the landfill. Improperly labeled, colored, and placed bins make recycling confusing for both the passionate environmentalist and the rushed passerby.

HOW DO I COMMUNICATE MY RECYCLING PROGRAM?

Communicate and engage all stakeholders in your recycling program properly will ensure the success of your recycling program.

CUSTODIAL STAFF

Engage and educate your custodial staff. Make sure they:

- Receive this toolkit Walk through it with them.
- Know whether or not the recycling hauler will allow the recyclables to be put in plastic liners or bags when they go into the dumpsters. Usually recycling haulers do not want any plastic bags in the recycling bins and they do not want the plastic liners either. So it's best to empty the recycling contents of the plastic liners into the recycling dumpster and throw the plastic bags and liners away.
- Replace the bins every day after emptying them, to the exact same location in the exact same sequence. Consistency with recycling for staff and visitors is key.

LET'S RECYCLE RIGHT



Be proud about your organization's recycling efforts and communicate the "Let's recycle right!" campaign to all of your employees, students, visitors, guests and customers. Send out newsletters, announcements and videos to let everyone know that you're ramping up your recycling and how important it is for the environment and the economy that we all recycle *right* (properly)!

Communicate, "When in doubt, throw it out (throw it in the trash)". Trash contaminating the recycling bin is a serious problem for the recycling and manufacturing industries. It's better to error on the side of caution by throwing something of question in the trash bin versus in the recycling bin. There is a label to communicate that, too!



recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

POSTERS AND BANNERS

Request the celebrity poster and banner artwork from Recycle Across America to you on your premises. Send an email to info@recycleacrossamerica.org if you'd like high-resolution banners of the celebrity "Let's recycle right!" ads for your property.



recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

DO'S AND DON'TS

It is helpful to show clearly in one label what can and cannot be recycled. While this label may not be displayed at each bin, it should be used for educational purposes and be located somewhere in the office where it is clear to see for everyone.



Do NOT throw these items in this cart!

- NO plastic bags
- NO food waste
- NO food tainted items (napkins, papertowels, tissue)
- NO pizza boxes
- NO egg cartons
- NO ice cream cartons
- NO milk cartons
- NO waxy paper cartons
- NO juice boxes
- NO aluminum foil
- NO plastic cups or silverware
- NO compostable plastics or dishware
- NO aerosol cans
- NO plastics other than bottles and jugs with necks
- NO caps or lids
- NO garbage

YES, throw these items in this cart!

- YES, newspaper and newspaper inserts made of paper
- YES, magazines and catalogs
- YES, paper junk mail and envelopes
- YES, cardboard
- YES, office and school paper (colored paper too!)
- YES, boxboard/paperboard e.g. cereal boxes
- YES, brown paper bags
- YES, aluminum cans
- YES, tin and steel cans
- YES, glass jars and bottles
- YES, plastic milk jugs
- YES, plastic bottles and jugs (only with necks)
- YES, phone books

www.recycleacrossamerica.org
© The information on this site is for informational purposes only. All rights reserved. Recycling is a complex process and the information on this site is not intended to be a substitute for professional advice. Please consult with your local recycling authority for more information.

HOW DO I MEASURE MY PROGRESS?

RESEARCH THE FINANCIAL BENEFITS OF RECYCLING IN YOUR COMMUNITY



This is very important -- contact your city, county and state's waste management government officials and ask them if there are any financial incentives for your organization to recycle and decrease your organization's trash volumes. For example in Minneapolis, MN, the combined state, county and city tax on trash hauling is more than 75%. Therefore if you pay \$1000 for a *trash* dumpster and *trash* hauling, your bill will be more than \$1750 with tax included. But in Minneapolis, there are no taxes charged on *recycling* dumpsters, services and hauling for recyclables.

PRO TIP

Every organization should increase its recycling levels and dumpster size hauling and frequency for recycling, and respectively decrease their dumpster and hauling services for landfill or trash. This can equate to thousands of dollars in savings for your organization.

MONITOR YOUR RECYCLING FOR MONEY

Ask your waste and recycling hauler to help evaluate your building's waste and recycling volumes. When requested, your hauler should be willing to help measure the volume of your trash and the volume of your recyclables. Ask them to provide a complete report including itemized and separated fees for your landfill and separate fees and taxes specifically for your recycling. It is up to YOUR organization to request this audit and information if you intend to capture savings.



recycle across america®

simple solution. profound impact.

CONTINUE TO MONITOR YOUR VOLUMES and when possible:

1. Reduce the size of your landfill dumpsters.
2. Reduce the frequency of your landfill hauling.
3. Increase the size of your recycling hauling.
4. Increase the frequency of your recycling hauling.

PRO TIP

Once you've done a baseline audit of your landfill/trash volumes versus your recycling volumes, look for every opportunity to decrease landfill waste and increase 'clean' recycling volumes so that you can capture the financial benefits of recycling.

SHARE YOUR STORY WITH US!



Join the solution and the conversation with Recycle Across America!

Twitter: @RecycleAcrossAm

Facebook: Recycle Across America

Instagram: @recycleacrossamerica

Email us! info@recycleacrossamerica.org



Thank you for choosing to help your employees, clients, and everyone *recycle right*, wherever they may be.

GLOSSARY

Recycling: used newspapers, bottles, cans, etc. sent to a place where they are made into something new. It is important to separate non-reusable, costly trash from profitable recyclables.

Bins: receptacles that hold recyclables, trash, or compostables. It is important to choose durable bins that will withstand an organization's specific needs as well as the environments they may be placed in.

Compost: food and paper waste that can be broken down and organically processed into nutrient rich soil and sold to farmers.

Mixed Recycling: the recycling of many different types of plastics, metals and paper into a single bin. Also called single-stream recycling.

Dual Stream Recycling: recycling that is separated into two bins: cardboard/paper and metals/plastics.

Trash: discard matter; not recyclable.

Standardized Labels: similar to a standardized stop sign – or the standardization of time and nutritional facts – the national standardized labels serve to reduce public confusion at the recycling bin to reduce costly contamination (trash) in order to help the recycling industry flourish and save precious environmental resources.

Compostable Liners: bags made of plant-based materials that break down in the composting process and are green or very pale green. They are not plastic or black. They are used for containing compostables but may also be used to line recycling bins.

Hauler: a person or company employed in the transport of waste and recyclables by road.

Tipping Fees: the charge levied upon a given quantity of waste received at a waste processing facility. In the case of a landfill it is generally levied to offset the cost of opening, maintaining and eventually closing the site. It may also include any landfill tax that is applicable in the region.

Waste Audit: an analysis of a building's waste stream. It can identify what types of recyclable materials and waste a building generates and how much of each type is recovered for recycling or discarded.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Below are links to more information about the standardized label solution and Recycle Across America.

VIDEOS

How We Got To Now – Standardization of Time

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhDvGhFbpq8>

RAA Recycler Video - Pivot

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJxsCr8PgPA>

Video - RAA Amazing Planet

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZQXSoUBQlc>

Angie Harmon Commercial PSA

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0nOR0-vBzFw&feature=youtu.be>

Weather Channel Video

<https://vimeo.com/93171266>

Student Video

<https://plus.google.com/app/basic/stream/z134c1mgkxyctdeh004cf5qrsum0upnjxkk0k>

TerraCycle Recycle Right:

<http://www.takepart.com/video/2014/07/25/human-resources-recycle-across-america?cmpid=hum-raa-14>

ARTICLES

NY Times Article

<http://nyti.ms/JZ0BOa>

Forbes Article

<http://onforb.es/1hr6ZN9>

Recycling Today Article

<http://www.recyclingtoday.com/recycle-across-america-curbside-labels.aspx>

USA Today Article

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2015/08/17/recycling-confusing-but-new-ad-campaign-helps-consumers-sort-out/30288983/>