

## Counting to 7: plastic by the numbers

Take a quick look at any plastic detergent bottle, milk jug, shampoo bottle or sports drink container and you'll see the chasing arrows icon with a number inside. Great. But which ones can and can't be recycled? Truth is, these symbols don't tell you that. They're actually resin identification codes, created by and for the plastics industry in 1988 as a way of showing what type of plastic is being used. They were never a guarantee that any given item would be recycled.



### 1 PET (polyethylene terephthalate)

- **Where Do You Find It?** Beverage bottles, food jars, personal care product bottles.
- **Can I Put It In My Recycling?** If the neck of the bottle is smaller than the base, then yes. Make sure the bottles are completely empty and rinsed clean. Labels are OK, but caps belong in your trash bin.



### 2 HDPE (high density polyethylene)

- **Where Do You Find It?** Milk jugs, some juice bottles, bottles for household cleaners, and shampoo bottles.
- **Can I Put It In My Recycling?** If the neck of the bottle is smaller than the base, then yes. Make sure the bottles are completely empty and rinsed clean. Labels are OK, but caps belong in your trash. **Soft or tub plastics with a #2 — such as garbage bags, butter tubs and cereal box liners — should not go into your recycling.** Some stores will offer bag collection for recycling.



### 3 PVC (polyvinyl chloride)

- **Where Do You Find It?** Piping, siding, gutters, and windows, along with blister packaging and the protective wrap around bundled electrical and cable wires. Plus all the credit cards, bank cards and store cards in your wallet.
- **Can I Put It In My Recycling?** **No.** Unfortunately, PVC is highly toxic to process and cannot be currently recycled.



### 4 LDPE (low density polyethylene)

- **Where Do You Find It?** In its rigid form, you can find LDPE plastic in everything from squeezable tubes and bottles to kids toys. In its flexible "film" form, you can find LDPE plastic in bread wrappers, dry cleaning bags,

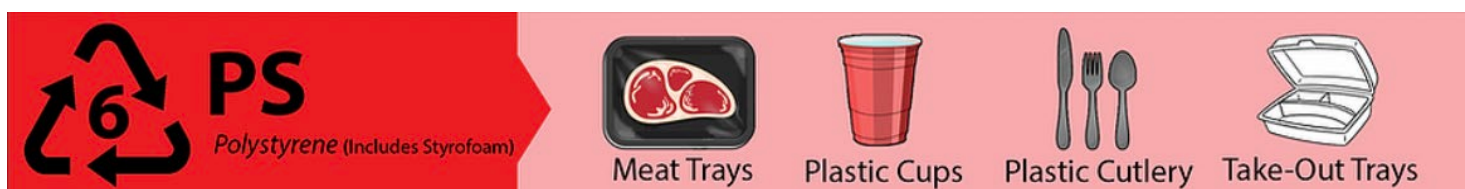
shrink wrap, grocery bags, sandwich bags, and the plastic barrier you peel off of frozen meals before putting them in the microwave.

- **Can I Put It In My Recycling? No.** Film plastics are not meant to be part of curbside collection programs — they are difficult to collect and to process, especially in the form of plastic bags and wraps. **They are commonly accepted at grocery stores, where they can be collected as a single stream of material.** When managed this way, they can eventually be processed into plastic lumber. Many cities, and even entire states, are attempting to ban these kinds of materials altogether, because when they're not properly managed, they become litter and marine debris.



### 5 PP (polypropylene)

- **Where Do You Find It?** Food containers, syrup bottles, medicine bottles, Tupperware, rope, carpet, packing tape, take-away food containers, lab equipment, bottle caps and straws.
- **Can I Put It In My Recycling? No.** Most sorting facilities are currently unable to effectively sort this type of plastic it tends to overall contaminate recycling loads.



### 6 PS (polystyrene)

- **Where Do You Find It?** Disposable plates and cups, grocery store meat trays, carry-out containers and egg cartons.
- **Can I Put It In My Recycling? No.** Since the foam breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces that scatter, consider placing 6 PS plastics in a bag, squeezing out the air, and tying it up before putting it into the trash.



### 7 (Miscellaneous)

- **Where Do You Find It?** Water jugs, computer cases, sunglasses, signs and displays, nylon fabric, and bullet-proof materials. Includes "bio-plastics," including "compostable" plastic.
- **Can I Put It In My Recycling? No.** These plastics are traditionally not recycled. Even if an item says it is "compostable" or "biodegradable," it is only under specific conditions. If put in compost, it is more likely to come out the other end as just compost contaminated with plastic.