

Kerbside Recycling 101

- **Why can't all recyclable objects go in kerbside recycling?**

Though there are nuances between different council areas, there are a few general rules to follow to recycle right using kerbside services.

It's important to keep in mind that these services were set up for packaging that you would get from the supermarket, that is, paper, some food and household item packaging. While some things have changed, this infrastructure is still largely in place, and has not kept up to date with packaging changes and consumer behaviours. With this in mind, generally accepted materials are:

- Paper and cardboard (uncoated)
- Cartons (e.g. milk or juice cartons)
- Hard plastic containers
- Glass Jars and containers
- Cans, aluminium* and steel

** if you collect and scrunch together clean foil to at least the size of a golf ball, you can recycle this as well.*

There are exceptions area by area, so always double-check your council services using [Recycling Near You](#).

- **There's a recycling symbol on the package. That means it can go in kerbside recycling, doesn't it?**

Not all arrows or triangle symbols mean you can recycle the item in kerbside recycling, or even in Australia. ***The only labels that will tell you whether an item can be recycled in kerbside recycling is the [Australasian Recycling Label](#), or ARL.***

Unlike other labels, the ARL is an evidence-based system underpinned by the Packaging Recyclability Evaluation Portal (PREP). It is not possible for *food packaging, bottles or containers* to have the ARL without a PREP assessment that backs up disposal claims.

PREP assesses not only the materials used to manufacture a piece of packaging, but also its shape, weight, size, inks, adhesives used and many other variables. PREP simulates the behaviour of packaging in the Australian and New Zealand recycling ecosystems, from the moment it is collected to when it is sorted at Materials Recovery Facilities and in subsequent processing facilities, ready to become new packaging or a product.

Is cleanliness next to QWEENliness?

- **Do I have to wash my recycling?**



A quick rinse is fine, you want most of the original product gone so it won't spill onto other recyclables and contaminate them. Just give your recyclables a rinse out with used dishwashing water or under the tap.

- **What about cardboard made dirty from food?**

For cardboard with food scraps, if it's only minimal and not scraps from meat, oil, or dairy it can go into your recycling bin.

For example, if your pizza box has an additional corrugated cardboard divider, it would be clean enough for your recycling bin, unless the pizza was particularly oily or cheesy. If the bottom of the pizza box was oily but the top clean, you could rip the box in half and recycle the clean portion.

Any greasy (including the greasy part of the pizza box) or soiled cardboard (including any painted with oil-based paints) will have to go in your general waste bin, (*not* FOGO, if you have this service available).

- **Is dirty aluminium okay?**

If the aluminium foil has too much food residue and heaps of oil, it often cannot be recycled. If it can be scrapped clean with minimal contamination, then it can be recycled.

If you collect and scrunch together clean foil to at least the size of a golf ball, you can recycle this as well.

Soft Plastics

- **Is there any way to recycle my soft plastic?**

For most Australians, there is no soft plastic recycling service at present. All soft plastics, including packaging, cling wrap, bubble wrap, chip packets and plastic shopping bags, must be disposed of in the general waste bin. If there is a small-scale soft plastic recycling service in your area, the best place to check is [Recycling Near You](#).

- **How do I know if something is considered a "soft plastic", like a water bottle?**

Look for the Australasian Recycling Label (ARL) to understand how to sort your packaging. The ARL is an evidence-based system for Australia and New Zealand, that provides you with easy-to-understand recycling information when you need it most. It removes confusion, saves you time and reduces waste going to landfill.

- **Will soft plastic recycling ever come back?**



A task force made up of Aldi, Coles, and Woolworths are working together to manage the stockpiled soft plastic from REDcycle to then, hopefully, look towards starting a new collection program in 2024. We have no confirmation on timelines for this project.

- **What should I do if soft plastic recycling isn't an option in my area?**

While recycling materials saves valuable resources from being wasted, it is important to reduce our need or reliance on soft plastics, and plastics in general. Where possible,

- Take your own shopping bags and produce bags to the supermarket,
- Invest in good quality containers and drink bottles to be used for many years.
- Support brands who use recycled and recyclable products and or packaging.

Coffee Cups

- **Are disposable/ paper coffee cups accepted in kerbside recycling?**

For most Australians, the answer is no, at present you cannot recycle coffee cups using your kerbside services. This is mainly due to their thin plastic lining (sometimes oil or plant-based) which requires specific recycling equipment to separate it from the paper so both materials can be recycled. The best place to double check kerbside recycling services in your area is [Recycling Near You](#).

- **Is there any way to recycle coffee cups?**

There are drop-off recycling service points where disposable coffee cups can be recycled through specialised recycling programs.

[Simply Cups](#) has partnered with 7-Eleven and various shopping centres, schools and community groups to provide the public with more than 1,400 recycling drop-off locations for disposable coffee cups, including compostable cups.

Your best alternative for take away coffee is to invest in a good quality reusable coffee cup that suits your lifestyle to reuse for many years to come.

Lids

- **Can I leave lids on plastic bottles to recycle in kerbside recycling services?**

Double check your local kerbside recycling rules at [Recycling Near You](#), and the [ARL](#) label on the bottle.

Bottle lids or caps can be left attached to drink bottles so that they are part of a larger container. If the lids are put into the recycling loose, they may fall through the processing machinery and end up contaminating other recycling streams such as glass.



If leaving the lid attached to the bottle you need to scrunch the bottle first to let out the air and make sure no liquid remains in the bottle, then replace the cap. This way the lid will not pop off when crushed by any machinery. For more sturdy bottles like a shampoo bottle, it should be fine to leave the lid attached.

Only do this if the lid is smaller than a credit card and both items are made from the same material, if it is the same size or larger, is best to separate it.

- **What about yoghurt or dip container lids?**

Always look for the [ARL](#) label first, this is your best guide. It will let you know whether you can recycle the plastic lid separately, or you should leave it attached to the larger container. You will also find advice for any aluminium or plastic seals that may also be present.

If your container does not have ARL labelling now, that does not mean it won't have it in the future, so keep looking out for it every time you are at the bin. Generally, hard plastic disposable container lids larger than a credit card should be fine for the recycling bin, and small lids of the same material should be left on the container. Refer to the above answer for more detail.

- **Can jam jar or pasta sauce lids go in kerbside recycling?**

Glass jars and larger metal lids can be recycled using kerbside recycling. You must ensure they go in separately, as they are different materials so need to be sorted as such.

Paper products

- **Why can't I recycle all kinds of paper?**

It is important to understand that just the material type doesn't determine the recyclability of an item, there are many factors that can affect the outcome such as shape, weight, laminates, inks etc.

Here are a few paper items that are not recyclable, and some that are but you need to do some prep:

Non-recyclable paper :

- Napkins, tissues or paper towels
- Laminated sheets
- Any paper packaging with the [ARL](#) featuring the 'bin' symbol.
- Shredded paper – Can be composted instead or recycled ONLY in paper bins collected separately.



- Take away paper packaging- As it is usually soiled with food, they cannot be recycled, but they can be composted.
- Waxed paper.
- Cardboard boxes filled with stuff, doesn't matter if it is all paper, never fill cardboard boxes, they should always be empty and flattened.

Recyclable paper with some prep:

- Paper envelope with plastic padding- Remove ALL the padding and only keep the paper
- Shopping bags: If handles are not made from paper, they need to be removed.
- Super sturdy cardboard box (like the one your mobile phone comes in) needs to be flattened otherwise will end up with other material containers.
- Post it notes: They can be recycled if you place them inside a used envelope, by themselves they are too small to be captured.



Household batteries

- **What should I do with my used batteries? My drawers are all full!**

It is important to remember that batteries should never go in your recycling bin. If put in your kerbside recycling bin, they have the potential to cause fires during collection or will eventually leak dangerous chemicals in the ground soil.

Fortunately, [Bcycle](#) is a product stewardship scheme that has made battery recycling far more accessible. By visiting their site or the batteries page on [Recycling Near You](#), you can find convenient locations for battery drop-off points.

If you regularly go through batteries at work, or want to provide battery recycling in your workplace, you can order a [Batteries 4 Planet Ark](#) box.

Vapes

- **Where can you recycle e-cigarettes and vapes?**

E-cigarettes and vapes do not currently have a recycling scheme. Even though they contain batteries and electronic components, they are not-considered e-waste due to their liquid cartridges. If you can safely remove the battery, they can be disposed of in battery collection points, which can be found [here](#).

More information about vape and e-cigarette recycling can be found on [Recycling Near You](#).

It is important to remember they **do not** belong in your kerbside recycling bin. If disposed of in your kerbside bin, they have the potential to cause fires during collection or will eventually leak dangerous chemicals in the ground soil. Best to avoid these products altogether.