

Plastic by Numbers

Here's a quick breakdown of what plastics mean by their number:

No. #1 – PET or PETE

Prevalent in soft drink, water and juice bottles, PET is usually clear. It is also found in salad dressing and mouthwash bottles. It's easily recycled and accepted by most curbside municipal programs. PET is recycled into fibers and increasingly back into bottles and packaging.

No. #2 – HDPE

This widely accepted plastic is typically opaque and found in milk jugs, yogurt tubs, butter tubs, household cleaner containers, juice bottles, shampoo bottles, cereal box liners and detergent bottles. HDPE is easily recycled and picked up by most curbside recycling programs. It's often recycled into picnic tables, pens, lumber, benches, detergent bottles and fencing.

No. #3 – V or PVC

PVC is used to make plumbing pipes, food wrap, medical equipment, shower curtains, detergent bottles and windows. The durable application of PVC is recyclable but it is seldom accepted by curbside recycling programs, mostly because 75% of it is used in building and construction so it doesn't pop up in the household waste stream.

PVC is recycled into paneling, flooring, speed bumps, decks and roadway gutters.

No. #4 – LDPE

This plastic is common in plastic shopping bags, food wraps, bread bags, dry cleaning bags, produce bags and wraps around toilet paper and paper towels. This material is difficult to collect curbside because its flimsy nature causes trouble and gets caught up in the sorting equipment at the MRF. But many grocery stores have collection programs for the shopping bags and other film materials. This plastic is recycled into bags, decking, compost bins, paneling, trash can liners and cans, and floor tiles.

No. #5 – PP

Increasingly becoming accepted by curbside recycle programs, plastic #5 is typically found in yogurt containers, deli takeout containers, ketchup bottles, syrup bottles,

medicine bottles and reusable food and drink containers. Polypropylene is recycled into brooms, auto battery cases, pallets, signal lights, ice scrapers and bicycle racks.

No. #6 – PS

Polystyrene is found in CD cases, egg cartons, meat trays, and disposable plates and cups. Most curbside programs do not accept it. When it is recycled, polystyrene is made into egg cartons, vents, foam packing and insulation.

No. #7 – Other

Found in sunglasses, iPod cases, computer cases, nylon, 3- and 5-gallon water bottles, No. 7 is a collection of all the plastic resins that don't fit into the other categories. When these mixed resins are recycled, they are turned into plastic lumber and other custom-made products.

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