



Recycling 101

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Learn more about the dos and don'ts of recycling so employees know how to answer customers' questions.

ESTIMATED COMPLETION TIME: Approximately 5 minutes for the PDF. Use the Additional Discussion section to spend more time on this topic.

HOW TO USE: The lesson includes a PDF that you can distribute to employees, hang in the breakroom for quick reference or even post in the store as a guide for customers. The trainer's notes will offer notes for each slide, but you may elaborate on each as much as you wish.

DISCUSSION GUIDE:

Introduction

Consumers who want to recycle generally understand that recycling is good for the environment. However, there may be some misunderstandings about what can and cannot be recycled. Anyone who wants to recycle needs to understand that it's important to only put items that can be recycled in the recycle bin. Sending the wrong items off to the recycling center can damage the facility's equipment. The recycling facility then has to send those non-recyclable items off to the landfill, which increases their costs. Here, we're going to talk about some of the commonly recycled items and a few recycling dos and don'ts.

The general rule of thumb is that if you are in doubt, leave it out. It's better to leave out that item that can't be recycled rather than have it damage a recycling machine.

General Guidelines

These are just general guidelines for most curbside recycling programs. It's always important for customers to check with their local recycling facility to see what items they take. Most recycling facilities will only take certain types of items. Additionally, some facilities will let you put all recyclables into one bin, where others will require you to separate them into separate bins.

First, look for the recycle symbol on the packaging. If it's a plastic container, make sure your recycling facility accepts that type of material.

- Paper. You can recycle paper and cardboard, including magazines, mail and newspaper. You cannot recycle shredded paper, gift wrap and gift bags. Shredding paper breaks up the paper fibers and makes it harder to reuse. Gift wrap and bags have a coating on them that cannot be recycled. Paper products such as paper towels and plates with food on them are dirty and cannot be recycled. Greasy containers, such as pizza boxes are also not recyclable.
- Glass. Most glass can be recycled, but do not put broken or sharp glass in the bin.
- Metal. Most metal such as aluminum and steel cans can be recycled. Just make sure you rinse them out so there is not liquid or food in them before putting them in the bin.
- Plastic. Most plastics are acceptable, but make sure your local recycler accepts the ID code on the plastic. Plastic bags, such as plastic shopping bags, are generally not acceptable. Look for retailers or recyclers who specifically say they will take plastic bags. Otherwise, they can damage the machines that process recyclable materials.
- Hazardous materials. Batteries are usually recyclable, but they cannot be put in the bin with more common recyclables. Take these to a special facility. You also cannot dispose of paint, oils or pesticides in a recycling facility. Take these to a special facility that specializes in hazardous materials.
- Electronics. Electronics have many recyclable parts, but they need to be taken to a facility that specializes in electronic waste disposal.

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION:

If you have an area for customers to drop off their recyclables, make sure everyone knows the rules of what you can and cannot accept.