

Wow – I can recycle this?!

DID YOU KNOW... Even hard-to-recycle polystyrene can be recycled into new products, like coat hangers¹.

DID YOU KNOW... 44 million tonnes of waste went to landfill in England in 2015⁹ – that's the equivalent of more than 3.5 million double-decker buses¹⁰!

It's possible to recycle almost anything these days. Take a look at the selection below to discover some of the more unusual items you no longer need to throw away.

WOODEN FURNITURE

Tables and chairs in good condition can be re-sold, upcycled or given to charity. Most wooden furniture can also be taken to your local recycling centre; typically, the easier it is to separate the materials an item is made from (removing metal fixings from a wooden chair, for example), the easier it is to recycle.



DISPOSABLE NAPPIES

Nappies aren't just smelly, they contain bodily waste and are made from mixed paper, plastics and cellulose². But several companies have now come up with ways of recycling them into compost, cat litter and insulation³.



BISCUITS

You can now munch with a clear conscience! Recycling company, TerraCycle, recycles all types of biscuit wrappers into hard plastic that can be re-moulded to make new products. Wrappers can be posted to them or disposed of in special bins around the country.



GLASS PERFUME BOTTLE

Clean glass bottles can go in most home recycling collections. They need to be empty (perfume can be disposed of in hazardous waste at local recycling centres), and any metal fittings and trigger sprays should be removed. Or why not upcycle old bottles into a set of pretty vases⁴?



CAR

85% of a car must be recycled or reused at the end of its life⁴, as cars contain all sorts of useful materials: from aluminium to glass and plastics. Scrap dealers will often pay for old vehicles; otherwise car makers will help owners dispose of their vehicle free of charge – usually through a recycling partner⁵.



BATTERIES

Never throw batteries in the bin! Instead, dispose of these at your recycling centre or any store selling batteries (shops selling more than 32kg of batteries a year – about 345 packs of 4 AA batteries – have to offer a collection service)⁶.



WRAPPING PAPER

Most wrapping paper can be recycled by your local authority; the exception is metallic wrapping paper. If in doubt, scrunch the paper into a ball: if it stays in the shape, it can be recycled⁷. Otherwise, reuse it for someone else's present or save it for craft activities.



JUICE CARTON

These haven't always been easy to recycle because they're made from more than one material (paper, plastic and sometimes foil). But recycling has become more widespread now, thanks in part to the UK's first drinks carton recycling factory opening in 2013⁸.



TIN OF PAINT

Most recycling centres accept empty metal paint cans. They won't take liquid paint, but there are products you can buy that harden paint. Community RePaint schemes also collect leftover, reusable paint and redistribute it to charities and communities.



TEDDY BEAR

Once-loved cuddly toys might still have a re-sale value on sites like eBay. You could also reuse parts for craft activities – or pass them onto another child if you can't bear to dissect them! Charities and playgroups will take them if they still have a safety label attached.



WHY CAN'T I RECYCLE EVERYTHING YET?



The local authority for your area decides what can be recycled where you live. They will be influenced by factors such as: whether facilities exist for recycling a material, and how much money they'll get from the collection. After all, somebody needs to buy an

item made from recycled material to justify the recycling – this is why buying recycled products is so important! Sometimes we can't recycle things because it's hard to break a product down into its separate materials. Baking paper, for example, is coated

in water-resistant wax. This makes it great for cooking – but stops it from disintegrating during recycling. Tissues and kitchen roll are typically made out of the lowest grade paper, which may have been recycled multiple times, so it's not feasible

to recycle them again – and they may be contaminated with food. Other contamination could be more dangerous. Clinical waste, such as used syringes, has to be incinerated – even though it might contain plastics and metals that could be recycled.

THE BENEFITS OF RECYCLING

- ▶ Recycling uses fewer natural resources (like oil) – which are running out – to make new products.
- ▶ Making products from recycled materials uses up to 95% less energy than using raw materials¹¹.
- ▶ Less waste goes to landfill.
- ▶ Recyclable materials like glass and plastic would stay buried forever in landfill – what a waste!
- ▶ PLUS: It's easy to recycle... so why not do it?

THE FUTURE: 100% RECYCLED?

The world is changing... Landfill operators now make money from recycling and producing energy, rather than operating rubbish dumps¹². Technology is making it possible to recycle more than ever before, and many manufacturers

are moving to what's known as a 'circular economy' (see diagram), in which products are repaired, reused and remanufactured. It's a world in which end-of-life products are easily dismantled and reused or recycled. It makes recycling the norm and

gives a value to things we previously thought of as 'rubbish'... So the question in the future might not be, 'why can't I recycle everything yet?' but 'why wouldn't you recycle everything?'



Learn more about recycling and materials science at jointhepod.org

EDF Energy is a trading name used by EDF Energy Customers plc. (Reg. No. 02226297, registered office: 40 Grosvenor Place, London, SW1X 7BN).

Sources: 1. www.styropack.co.uk/recycling/; 2. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/1662613.stm>; 3. www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/sep/06/billions-dirty-nappies-diapers-recycled-pet-litter-insulation-compost-waste-landfill; 4. www.wired.com/2013/02/26/printed-car/; 5. www.cartakeback.com/official-car-recycling-partner-to-the-car-makers/rag-cities/; 6. www.recyclenow.com/what-to-do-with-batteries-17; 7. www.wrap.org.uk/content/nis-season-be-aware-recycling; 8. www.ace-uk.co.uk/media-centre/news/uk-only-beverage-carton-recycling-plant-opens-for-business/; 9. Waste management in England data table from www.gov.uk/government/statistics/waste-management-for-england-2015; 10. <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/buses/new-routemaster-for-this-page-2>; 11. www.eia.gov/kids/energy.cfm?page=environment_recycling-basics; 12. www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/feb/27/waste-rubbish-industry-landfill-recycling-dumps-incineration.