

The green house WASTE WORLD

Keen to do the right thing when you recycle rubbish?
Sarah Pickette asks an expert to sort through the myths.

Do you ever hesitate as your hand hovers over the top of the recycling bin and wonder, “Is this item I’m about to drop in recyclable?” If you do, you are not alone. Australians are, on the whole, enthusiastic and knowledgeable recyclers but most of us occasionally make mistakes. Here, Brad Gray, head of campaigns at Planet Ark, clears up some misconceptions about what can and can’t go into a kerbside collection.

Can I recycle plastic bottle lids?

“Most councils want you to throw the tops out and recycle the bottle,” says Gray. “This is because, at most recycling stations, jets of air separate different materials. A light shoots into whatever is on the conveyor belt and it detects what type of plastic a bottle is.” Plastic marked with a 1 gets a jet of air shooting it off in one direction, 2 goes in a different direction, 3 another. “If a lid is on, the bottle may still have liquid in it and the jet of air is less likely to get it to the direction it needs to go.” Lids can also trap air, which causes issues when plastics are baled after sorting. Advice varies, though: the South Australian government’s Zero Waste SA website suggests collecting plastic bottle tops in a plastic milk bottle and, when it’s full, recycling them together.

Can I recycle aerosols?

“Yes, every one of them,” says Gray. Aerosols are the number-one item Australians send to landfill unnecessarily. Spray bottles and pump packs can generally go in, too. “Bin the top and recycle the bottom.”

Do I need to rinse jars and tins before I recycle them?

“No,” says Gray. “People wash them so their bin doesn’t smell, but there’s no need.” By all means rinse out your jars as you wash up, he says, but “don’t waste water otherwise”. These receptacles go into a furnace, so food scraps are not an issue. “The exception is a container that’s held something greasy.” You don’t want, say, an empty sardine can coming into contact with paper in your bin and contaminating it.

Can small pieces of paper be recycled?

“Yes, scraps from children’s craft are fine. What’s not is shredded paper: it can get caught in the machinery.” Baking paper is OK, as are Post-It notes, embossed paper and empty pizza boxes (provided they’re not too greasy). Takeaway coffee cups are not, nor are coated-paper shopping bags. “If you can’t make a small tear in the corner easily, don’t put it in the recycling.”

H&G

For more on household recycling, visit planetark.org.

THREE HOMEWARE ITEMS WITH A SENSE OF REPURPOSE



In Ghana, where clean water is commonly sold in **plastic sachets**, weavers transform used sachets and scrap cloth into the chic Bolga **basket**, \$95. The Toucan Shop; www.thetoucanshop.com.



Proudly made in Melbourne from locally sourced, **recycled hardwoods**, this TiPi **side table**, \$900, is as eco-friendly as it is good-looking. Yard Furniture; www.yardfurniture.com.au.



The elegant Delirium **sideboard**, \$6350, features a Paperock (**recycled paper and resin composite**) frame encasing a feature front in reclaimed timber. Auld Design; aulddesign.com.au.