



# SORT IT OUT!

## ACTIVITY:

## LEARNING AIMS:

- To help students understand what can/cannot be recycled and why

## TIME:

20 minutes

## RESOURCES:

- Box of recyclable and non-recyclable items. This can include:
  - Takeaway coffee cups
  - Wrapping paper
  - Sticky tape
  - Tissue paper/kitchen roll
  - Crisp packet
  - Takeaway box (food)
  - Plastic carrier bag
  - Straws
  - Plastic bottles, caps and other plastic items
  - Plastic milk bottle
  - Yoghurt pot

## ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

Ask the group to sort the box of items into two piles, one that they think can be recycled and the other that can't.

Before reading out each of the answers below, ask students to specify if they thought the item was 'Recyclable' or 'Non-recyclable'.

Top tip – 'Match the symbols' is a great activity to do straight after this one!



South Tyneside Council



- **Takeaway Coffee Cups - NO**

Takeaway coffee cups are made of paper so a lot of people assume that they can be recycled. However, takeaway coffee cups are also treated with a special coating (often wax) that enables them to safely contain your hot beverage. This special coating makes the cup non-recyclable.

Part of the issue with takeaway coffee cups is that the protective sleeve that comes with them is often recyclable (and it's usually clearly marked as recyclable). However, a lot of consumers don't realise that it's only the protective sleeve that can be put in the recycling bin – instead they throw the whole lot in.

- **Wrapping Paper – YES and NO**

Wrapping paper is a difficult one. A lot of different kinds of wrapping paper are recycled; however, there are a few types that are not recyclable.

Wrapping paper that is foil, glittery, or even a bit shiny, is not recyclable as it cannot be mulched. Glittery paper can turn a whole batch of recycled paper glittery - it gets everywhere!

There's another part of wrapping paper that is often over looked, one that can contaminate a whole batch of recycled paper... sticky tape.

- **Sticky Tape - NO**

Most recyclers will not accept anything with sticky tape attached. The plastic used in sticky tape is not recyclable and can prevent paper from being thoroughly mulched.

When you are recycling paper or card it's important to ensure that all sticky/plastic tape (such as clear tape or brown parcel tape) is removed before putting the item in a recycling bin.

- **Tissue Paper/Kitchen Roll - NO**

Surprising as it may seem, you can't recycle tissue paper or kitchen roll!

A lot of tissue paper is made from recycled paper. This means that it can't be recycled again - the fibres are too short and will result in poor pulp in the recycling process.

Additionally, tissue paper is often used for less than sanitary means. This makes it extremely unpleasant for recycling sorters!

- **Crisp packets - NO**

We eat over 5 billion packets of crisps a year in the UK yet there isn't a single council in the country that collects and recycles crisp packets!



- **Takeaway box – YES and NO**

Takeaway boxes made of card can be recycled as long as they've been cleaned

Polystyrene takeaway boxes can't be recycled. Its lightness means that a large bulk of polystyrene will only provide a small amount of recyclable material... and to do this requires specialist compacting machinery! As a result only 1% of households in the UK are able to put expanded polystyrene in their recycling boxes.

- **Plastic Grocery Bags - NO**

Plastic bags are often the most common plastic objects around the house, and we use them by the billions. They also end up in landfills and, even worse, in our oceans. We cannot recycle plastic bags because they tend to become caught in the recycling machinery, potentially causing damage the equipment.

- **Plastic Bottles, Caps and Other Plastic Items YES – just not the tops!**

Recycling plastic bottles is the main concern for many people. However, if you recycle plastic bottles, such as water, fizzy drinks, detergent bottles or other containers with a hard plastic twist-off or flip-top cap, make sure you remove the cap tossing them the bottle in the recycling bin. Hard plastic caps are typically made from polypropylene, or plastic #5, one of the largest categories of things that cannot be recycled.

- **Straws – NO, but...**

As it turns out, plastic straws can technically be recycled, but... the problem is that plastic straws are small, thin, and bend easily. This is a problem because they fall easily into the cracks and crevices of recycling machinery. Therefore, most recyclers do not accept plastic straws, and most straws that do make it to a recycling facility do not become recycled.

- **A plastic milk bottle - YES**

Plastic milk bottles are made from a plastic known as HDPE. You should see a number 2 in the recycling symbol on the bottle. As HDPE is easily recycled (often into new milk bottles) it's in high demand and valuable to recycling companies.

- **A yoghurt pot - YES**

To be honest, this is almost a 50/50.

With yoghurt pots it really depends on what plastic they're made from. If it's polypropylene, then they should be recycled - look for a number 5 in the recycling symbol. Otherwise they are likely be made from polystyrene or PVC and probably won't be recycled.



## DID YOU KNOW.?

### Top items that people do not know they CAN recycle

- Kitchen foil and foil trays that are used but still clean
- Empty deodorant aerosols and hairspray (with plastic cap removed)
- Empty surface cleaner bottle with the trigger spray – can be reused with refill
- Metal lids
- Empty bleach bottles (with cap removed)
- Aluminium tubes such as tomato puree (with plastic cap removed)
- Envelopes with windows

### ...and some common items that people wrongly think can be recycled!

- Hand soap pump dispenser tops
- Wine glasses
- Glass cookware
- Window glass
- Greasy takeaway pizza boxes
- Soft plastic/laminated foil packaging such as pet food and baby food pouches
- Photo paper
- Nail varnish bottles
- Crisp packets
- Post-it notes

