Recycling quiz

is your chance to show how much you know about recycling or learn how to update old habits. How well did you score?

1. Recycling facilities are for-profit businesses that sell cubes of recycled material. Buyers may reject entire loads of material if they are contaminated. (True/False)
2. Wrapping up similar items (like food cans) in plastic bags makes it easier for recycling facilities to sort them. (True/False)
3. Plastic bottle caps are not recyclable. (True/False)
4. Plastic utensils, styrofoam, and clamshell containers (like what you buy berries in) are all recyclable. (True/False)
5. Pizza boxes that are wet or have food stains are not recyclable. (True/False)
6. Plastic bags are recyclable, just not in your curbside recycling bin. (True/False)
7. When you are unsure whether something is recyclable, you should recycle it just in case. (True/False)

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Answers

**1. True**

When it comes to recycling, "one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch." Liquid and food debris are the worst culprits. If a full bottle of water or detergent spills onto a stack of cardboard, the soggy cardboard will become a useless mush in the sorting machines. Leftover yogurt in your Chobani container will get smeared on everything around it, and the company buying that bale of plastic will reject it. To save time and money, workers in the Waste Management recycling facility will search out and throw away anything contaminated with food or liquid.

Related: [How Recycling Works](https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-science/recycling.htm)

**2. False**

In truth, all you're really doing is sending those bagged cans straight to the garbage heap. Plastic bags can get jammed in the large sorting machines at a single-stream recycling facility, when that happens, facilities have to shut down the plant and have employees go in and manually remove that film plastic. Not only is it a problem for our efficiency, but it's a safety issue for our employees that have to remove the material.

Read more: [10 Things You Can Do to Help Save the Earth](https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-science/save-earth-top-ten.htm)

**3. False**

Plastic bottle caps are now recyclable, but only if they are attached to the bottle! If your local Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) says they do not accept caps on plastic containers, let them know that The Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) supports caps and closures to remain on containers before being placed in the recycling cart or bin. Equipment and policies at the local level may take time to adapt.

You might find interesting: [Top 10 Eco-friendly Substitutes for Plastic](https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-tech/sustainable/5-plastic-substitutes.htm)

**4. False**

Unfortunately, plastic utensils, styrofoam and clamshell containers are all not recyclable.

Read more: [What Are Single-use Plastics and Should They Be Banned?](https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/conservation/issues/single-use-plastics.htm)

**5. True**

Pizza boxes with food or oil stains are not recyclable and are considered contaminants in recycling facilities. If the top part of the box is clean, cut it out and recycle it — the rest belongs in the garbage.

Recycle food waste with composting: [How Composting Works](https://home.howstuffworks.com/composting.htm)

**6. True**

Plastic bags are 100 percent recyclable, just not in your curbside recycling bin. There's even a handy website, plasticfilmrecycling.org, where you can find local grocery stores and retailers that will take your old plastic grocery bags.

Related: [5 Unusual Uses for Plastic Bags](https://lifestyle.howstuffworks.com/crafts/recycled/5-unusual-uses-for-plastic-bags.htm)

**7. False**

Trying to recycle something that isn’t recyclable just delays its trip to the landfill. Items like styrofoam, curling irons, rubber hoses, and car parts are contaminants at recycling facilities. Often, you’re better off donating to Goodwill!

<https://www.howstuffworks.com/howstuffworks-newsletter-quiz.htm>