

Recycle, Recycle, Recycle

By Duval Reads

I asked an artist to make a picture with these green recycling arrows on top of me. I hope this will help you remember that recycling is very healthy for good old Earth. Recycling is so important that I have come back to tell you even more about it, just to make sure that you understand how much good you are doing when you recycle something. The very first step in the recycling process is, instead of throwing recyclable materials away in an ordinary trash can, you must put these things aside and save them in another container, like a recycling bin.

Once you have saved a lot of things to be recycled, they need to be brought to a place called a recycling center. Sometimes people bring their own recyclables directly to the recycling center. In this picture you can see a place with several large bins of different colors. People can bring all their recyclable materials here, but everything has to go in the right place. Glass goes in one bin, cans in another, paper in another, and so on.

In some places, though, people do not have to go to the recycling center themselves. Instead, they can set out their recycling bins by the side of the road, just like they set out their garbage cans, and a special recycling truck comes by to empty the bins and take the recyclables to the recycling center.

I don't know about you, but I think recycling is very interesting. Here's a colorful recycling picture. Can you guess what's being recycled in this picture?

This is a picture of plastic bottle tops! All of these bottle tops were collected at a recycling center. Then they were taken to a plastics recycling factory where they were pressed together in a big colorful mishmash. Later, these bottle tops will be melted down into a liquid so that they can be remolded and turned into something new made of plastic.

Look around your classroom right now, and see if you can spot anything made of plastic. I bet you can! Maybe it's even made from recycled plastic. Or, maybe it's something you can recycle when you're done using so it can be made into something else.

What's in this picture? Here are some cans made out of a metal called aluminum. Maybe you have had drinks that come in cans like these. If you throw a can away into a trash can and send it off to a landfill, it will take at least five hundred years for that aluminum can to break down and decompose! But if you put the same can in a recycling bin instead, the aluminum metal can be reused, and the cans don't have to be buried in a landfill.

Let's take a closer look at how cans are recycled. This diagram, or drawing, shows what happens when you recycle an aluminum can. Aluminum is a natural resource that is mined and dug out of the earth. From there, it goes to a factory where the raw aluminum is made into metal cans that can be filled with things, such as soda. After you buy a can of soda and drink it, you

are left with an old, used can. You can throw the can in the garbage, but then it will end up in a landfill. A better, more responsible solution is to put the empty can into a recycling bin.

These cans have already been sorted and cleaned at a recycling center and are now at a special recycling factory for aluminum. Workers at the recycling factory crush the cans and melt them down in a big cooker with lots of other cans. Maybe they'll make a new can, and the cycle will begin all over again—the can gets filled with something to eat or drink. Someone uses the can and puts it in a recycling bin. The can is brought to a recycling center and finally a factory, and so on, again and again.

What are these bottles made of? These bottles are made of glass. If you tossed bottles like these in the trash, they would be hauled away to a landfill. Some kinds of glass take about three thousand years to decompose. That's a long time! Luckily, many glass items can be recycled instead.

At the glass recycling factory, the glass is crushed into little pieces. Crushed glass is then put into a very hot furnace and melted into a super-hot, glowing liquid. With enough heat, glass melts just like ice melts.

Here is a little piece of glass that has been heated up so much that it is just about to melt and turn to liquid. Now imagine a big pot full of little bits of glass like this, all eventually melting together into a thick, hot, syrupy liquid. That's what you would find at a glass recycling factory.

This picture shows the inside of a bottle-making factory. These are freshly made bottles. They are so hot you dare not touch them! But they'll be cool and hard again soon.

Recycling really isn't hard to do, but I'll admit that it does require a little bit of extra work. Taking the time to decide whether to throw something away in the garbage can or whether to put it in the recycling bin doesn't always make it to the top of the to-do list. But it really is worth the time to take care of good old Earth!

Be sure to ask yourself the next time you use a bottle, a can, or anything else: Is this recyclable? Can I conserve natural resources by making it into something useful again?