



Recycling Bin Messaging and Placement Best Practices

**PepsiCo's sustainable packaging
vision is to build a world where
packaging never becomes waste.**

Recycling is key to making this vision a reality. By turning used packaging into new materials, we can create a circular economy for plastic and keep valuable resources in use.

We understand that improving recycling rates requires a collective effort, but PepsiCo strives to play its part. We're investing in and partnering with organizations to strengthen recycling systems. We're also setting ambitious goals to reduce plastic use, improve packaging design, and support a circular economy for the plastic we do use.

Consumer engagement and proper collection are two important components of a successful recycling system. Therefore, we've worked with a research partner to understand the most effective bin messaging and placement strategies to maximize participation in recycling. We are excited to share the results with you.

Thank you for your partnership, and for helping us work towards our vision.

Make Every Second Count: Designing Impactful Bin Signage

Disposal decisions are made within seconds! Here are recommendations for crafting impactful recycling signage:

Focus on Clarity and Simplicity

- Prioritize clean design, legible fonts, and an organized layout.
- Minimize clutter and use simple, direct language.

Visual Appeal Matters

- Leverage visuals or illustrations, coupled with familiar terminology. This is crucial for those whose primary language is not English.
- Utilize color variation and grouping to enhance visual distinction.
- People respond well to branded product images for recyclable streams as they have prior connections and familiarity with them.

Choice of Words is Important

- Use clear descriptions instead of technical jargon. For example, use “Empty Cans and Plastic Bottles” or “Cans and Bottles Only” instead of “Beverage Containers.”
- Emphasize what’s accepted with terms like “only” to prevent contamination.
- For recycling streams that accept multiple materials, utilize “mixed recycling” instead of terms like “single stream” or “commingled recyclables.”
- For the waste category, “Waste” or “Trash” are preferable to “Landfill” to help avoid wish-cycling, an act in which people put non-recyclables in the wrong bin with the hope it will be recycled anyway.

RECYCLING



COMPOST



TRASH



Here is an example. →
Want to use the design and illustrations in this example?
Download them [here!](#)

Go Beyond the Bin!

Recycling bins are a crucial part of the equation, but effective programs go beyond them. To truly optimize recycling efforts and improve messaging success, consider these strategies:

Message from Start to Finish

Inform patrons at product purchase, throughout their visit, and directly on bins for various touchpoints within the venue.

Show and Tell

Utilize authentic photos of recyclable items readily available on-site. This visual reinforcement aids comprehension and encourages participation. It's best if the signage matches the images or illustrations used on the bins themselves.

Strategic Placement is Key

Install signage in high-traffic areas where disposal decisions are most likely to be made.

Standardize Your Signage

Standardization of bins and signage across the venue allows for the user to consistently see the same design, potentially multiple times. Repetition allows for an easier time recalling the correct information, helping to reinforce the message.

Benefits:

Increased Participation

Clear communication leads to more confident recycling choices.

Reduced Contamination

Less confusion means less waste in the wrong bin.

Sustainability Champion

Showcase your venue's commitment to environmental sustainability.



BIN PLACEMENT

The Right Bin, Right Where You Need It: Convenience is Key!

Proper bin placement is essential for managing litter and encouraging recycling. To optimize waste management, strategically place bins in high-traffic areas such as entrances and exits, concession stands, and pathways.

Recycling rates increase when recycling and compost bins are positioned near the point of decision-making, such as where people consume food and beverages. A University of British Columbia study found that convenient recycling bin placement in student residence halls increased the recycling of containers by 147%¹. It's best to study foot traffic patterns within the grounds to ensure optimal bin placement, as each location will have its own unique needs.

To maximize convenience and clarity, pair recycling and waste bins together. This "twin the bin" approach encourages correct disposal. Avoid placing bins back-to-back, as this can obscure one bin from view.

BIN DESIGN

Bin Shape and Color

The shape and color of waste bins significantly influence how people identify and dispose of their materials. This helps reduce confusion among recycling, trash, and compost streams.

Shape

Rectangular or square bins are typically associated with recycling, while round bins are often linked to trash. A study by George Washington University and Keep America Beautiful² found that over half of respondents identified round bins for garbage and rectangular bins for recycling. Specialized bins, like bottle-shaped containers for beverage recycling, can further enhance identification.

Color

Gray or black bins are commonly associated with trash, blue bins with recycling, and brown or green with compost. Combining distinct signage with bin colors can effectively guide individuals toward proper disposal.

Lid Design

Lid design also plays a role in material associations and disposal behavior. Restrictive lids with circular cutouts for beverage containers or slit cutouts for paper can help prevent contamination. Hinged lids, while useful for reducing contamination in composting bins, may decrease the overall capture rate of materials due to the additional effort required.

Recommendations:

Prioritize High-Traffic Areas

Analyze foot traffic patterns and place bins where people congregate and move around.

Pair the Streams

Keep waste, recycling, and compost bins (if applicable) together for easy access and clear visual distinction.

¹ Source: vi DiGiacomo, A., Wu, D. W.-L., Lenkic, P., Fraser, B., Zhao, J., & Kingstone, A. (2017). Convenience improves composting and recycling rates in high-density residential buildings. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 61(2), 309–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2017.1305332>

Recommendations:

Use Color-Coded Bins

Gray or black for trash, blue for recycling, and green or brown for compost.

Employ Specialized Bins

Can or bottle-shaped bins, or lids with circular cutouts for beverage-only recycling.

Avoid Open-Top Bins for Recycling Streams

These can lead to confusion and contamination.

Use Restrictive Lids

For limited-material recycling or composting scenarios.

² Source: <https://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2017/07/17/bin-the-know/>