

Plastics Recycling 101

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Those numbers and symbols on the bottom of plastics may seem complicated and frustrating when deciding what to throw into the recycling. However, a simple rule of thumb when taking plastics to the Stoney Mountain recycling center or for those using the available recycling haulers in Henderson County such as Curbside Management, serving Hendersonville and Fletcher, or GDS, serving Laurel Park, is to look at the shape of the plastics. If the plastic has a neck that is smaller than the base, then it is acceptable for recycling. Plastics such as plastic food storage containers, yogurt containers, and plastic bags are not accepted. Normally, these plastic jugs will have a #1 or #2 symbol stamped on them.

Number 1 PET or PETE plastics are the most commonly used for such things as single use bottled drinks, mouth wash bottles, peanut butter containers, and salad dressing bottles. To get even more technical, PET stands for polyethylene terephthalate. This material is often the highest in demand for remanufacturers.

Number 2 HDPE (high density polyethelene) is found in milk jugs, juice bottles, bleach, detergent and household cleaner bottles, shampoo bottles bags, and motor oil bottles.

Remember, though, even if your plastics may have a Number 1 or Number 2 on the bottom, it will not be recycled unless it has a neck smaller than the base. This has a lot to do with the actual strength of the materials. Even though the plastics may be made of the same chemical materials, they are definitely not created equal!

So let's talk more trash now that we know what plastics can be recycled in Henderson County. Here's the question you may asking yourself: What is the point of even bothering to recycle plastics? Well, would you throw away a perfectly good fleece jacket you bought and worn only once during a cold snap? Or would you keep it until you could wear it next fall? That's how plastic recycling is. These bottles can be used again. You may be surprised to know that plastic bottles, jugs, and jars can be used to make such things as polar fleece, fiber, tote bags, furniture, carpet, paneling, floor tiles, pens, pipes, benches, picnic tables, and fencing.

Still not convinced to recycle your plastics? Then think about it this way: it takes less energy to use recyclables than to create new raw materials. These resources can be used in other places such as running our cars and heating our homes. Also, it is important to consider where all our trash goes. Well, it doesn't really ever go away, right? Trash can always be hauled to a landfill where it is out of sight and out of mind. But, each time a landfill is closed, a new site much be found. Trash must be hauled farther and farther away. Plastic recycling, and recycling in general, is valuable to manufacturers who can use these materials to make new products. Think about that when you wear your fleece jacket again!

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