

## Best Practices for Recycling in the Borough of Swarthmore

### Why Recycling Is Important

Recycling helps save resources by giving additional life to materials that would otherwise end up in an incinerator or a landfill. The best practice is to **reduce** what you buy and **reuse** as much as possible; then **recycle** whatever you can. Think carefully before making purchases. Consider good quality that won't need to be replaced quickly, and choose items that are reusable rather than single-use items. Proper recycling, including keeping trash and yard waste out of your recycling, helps to reduce the cost of waste disposal for the Borough (see below).

### What Is Accepted In Curbside Recycling

The materials with the highest value for recycling are aluminum cans and paper and cardboard. Paper must be clean and free of food stains in order to be recycled.

Materials currently accepted in your Swarthmore curbside recycling bin include:

- **Mixed paper and cardboard:** All non-paper such as plastic liners and Styrofoam inserts should be removed. Do not include tissues, paper towels, or paper attached to other materials such as plastic or foil. *Note: Pizza boxes and shredded paper are not accepted curbside but are accepted at the Swarthmore Recycling Center (see below).*
- **Cartons: Milk, juice, broth.**
- **Metal: Aluminum and steel food and drink cans.** Rinse before recycling. Other scrap metal is not accepted.
- **Mixed glass:** Remove caps and rings. Food and drink bottles and jars only. Do not add window glass, drinking glasses, Pyrex, baking ware, ceramic, dishes, or lightbulbs.
- **Plastics #1, #2, and #5:** The recycling symbol on the bottom of the container will confirm recyclability. Although the Borough webpage lists all plastics #1—#7 as being accepted, only #1, #2, and #5 are currently usable for recycling. These plastics include bottles, jars, and jugs, which should be rinsed before recycling. Do not include Styrofoam (e.g., meat trays and egg cartons) or film plastic (e.g., bags or cling wraps).

### What Items Are Recyclable But Are Not Accepted Curbside

Recyclable items that are not accepted curbside should be brought to designated locations for proper recycling. These include:

- **Electronics and items with cords:** These are accepted at various electronics stores and at periodic recycling events in the community or the county.
- **Plastic bags and clear plastic film:** Most supermarkets collect plastic bags for recycling, so returning them to the store where you got them is a good option. Clear film plastic from the following sources may also be acceptable for recycling in retail store bins: carryout, produce, newspaper, bread, and dry-cleaning bags, air pillows (deflated), and product wrap on cases of water/soda bottles, paper towels, napkins, disposable cups, bathroom tissue. All plastic bags should be clean and dry and receipts removed. Try to reduce (or better yet, eliminate) the number of plastic bags you use and instead use reusable shopping bags.

- **TVs:** Current Pennsylvania law hinders recycling of TVs in Pennsylvania but they can be recycled in New Jersey and Delaware. Locations in Pennsylvania that accept TVs for disposal will likely charge a fee. **E Force Recycling** (1229 South Napa St., Philadelphia) charges \$40; **Retrievr.com** charges anywhere from \$38.00 to \$105.00, depending on the size of the TV, but will pick up from your home for a fee of \$12.50; and **Covanta** (2209 South 58<sup>th</sup> St., Philadelphia) offers free drop off to Pennsylvania residents on the first and third Wednesday of each month.
- **Pizza boxes:** Pizza boxes that are stained with food residue cannot be recycled in curbside recycling because the oil from the food contaminates the pulp used to make recycled paper. However, you can deposit your pizza boxes in the paper and cardboard bin at the Swarthmore Recycling Center even if they are stained with oil from the pizza. Any remaining food and the liner must be removed from the box.
- **Batteries:** Rechargeable batteries can be recycled at Best Buy, Home Depot, Lowe's, and Mom's Market. Household batteries can be disposed of in the trash or taken to a Delaware County Household Hazardous Waste collection event.

### **Do's and Don'ts of Recycling**

Single-stream curbside mixed recycling in Swarthmore is convenient because all items can be put into one bin. Single-stream curbside programs rely on mechanical sorting of recyclables, and small items and plastic film interfere with this process. Contaminated content adds to transportation and sorting costs, and all contaminated items will end up in the incinerator or landfill. To ensure that all the materials in your recycling bins will be successfully recycled, **do follow the points listed below.**

- **Avoid “wish-cycling.”** Even if something should be recyclable, it may not be recyclable in our area and will be thrown out at the Recycling Center. Contaminants reduce the likelihood of an entire shipment being recycled. Follow the adage: “When in doubt, throw it out.”
- **Place your recyclables loose in the bin rather than bagged.** Plastic bags clog the sorting machinery, so they have to be ripped open by hand at the recycling center. ***Plastic bags are not recyclable curbside or at the Recycling Center (see above comment about recycling plastic bags).***
- **Only put items larger than a credit card in your curbside recycling bin.** Items smaller than a credit card cannot be sorted properly and interfere with sorting machinery. This includes items such as shredded paper and loose plastic bottle caps.
- **Clean all items that you put in your recycling bin of food residue.** The food residue can contaminate other items in the load. Items caked with food will be thrown out.
- **Separate items of different material types.** For example, remove metal lids from glass bottles. Items such as packing peanuts and bubble mailers (which are not recyclable because the paper envelope is not separate from the plastic) should not be put in the recycling bin.
- **Remove materials from your recycling bin that are not recyclable.** In particular, remove Styrofoam from cardboard boxes and plastic liners from cereal and cracker boxes.
- **Keep trash out of the recycling.** Trash contaminates the load of recyclable material and adds to the cost of transportation and sorting.
- **Collapse all cardboard boxes (corrugated or paperboard) before recycling.**

## Other recycling resources (located in Swarthmore and nearby):

- **Swarthmore Recycling Center** (121 Dartmouth Avenue): Residents can bring paper, cardboard, aluminum cans, and clothing. The borough sells these source-separated products on the local recycling market. Acceptable paper includes all sizes and kinds, including shredded paper and pizza boxes (but remove remaining food and liners). The Used Clothing Drop-Off Shed accepts used clothing, shoes, belts, purses, blankets, linens, and stuffed toys. To learn more about what is recyclable in the borough and where to bring items that are not accepted curbside, go to the [Swarthmore Borough](#) website.
- **The Swarthmore Coop** (341 Dartmouth Avenue): Bins for used shoes (footwear), plastic bags, and Brita filters are located at the back of the store near the refrigerated section.
- **Retrievr.com** is a convenient recycling service that will pick up electronics and clothes for recycling from your doorstep for a low flat fee of \$12.50. There may be an additional fee for some electronics.
- **Community recycling events:** Keep an eye out for periodic electronics recycling events offered by nearby communities, particularly for TV and computer disposal. E Force Recycling lists their drop-off events on the Events tab on their website ([eforcecompliance.com](#)).
- **Clothing:** Several organizations accept used clothing in good condition, including Goodwill, City Team Ministries in Chester, Chester Eastside, Inc., Swarthmore Presbyterian Church (call before coming), First United Methodist Church in Media (Free Store), H & M Stores, Narenj Tree Foundation, Nana's Attic Thrift Store.
- **aFewSteps.org:** Explore the Recycling tab to find recycling options for a wide variety of items.

### Final Note

To support recycling efforts, it is important to buy products created with recycled content that will support the market for recycled materials. The best practice is to shape your spending habits to reduce waste and maximize recyclability. Minimize what you purchase. Choose products that are durable and lasting, have minimal packaging, and are recyclable. Then make the effort to recycle!