

Dear Recycle Lady



Dear Recycle Lady

Dear Recycle Lady,

I use many alcohol wipes to clean my glasses. Once the paper dries, can it go into office paper bin?

Likes to See Clearly

Dear Likes to See Clearly,

Alcohol wipes, baby wipes, and moist towelettes are all made of synthetic fibers, thus are neither recyclable nor compostable. Additionally, they are not biodegradable, so most of them end up in landfills where they add to the already huge amounts of non-biodegradable waste. Although some wet wipes are advertised as “flushable,” they should not be flushed down the toilet. These wipes do not disintegrate like toilet paper does and can form masses that clog sewer systems and block drains. They also contain a mixture of chemicals that can be toxic and harmful. For your good health, and for the sake of the environment, try some of the more eco-friendly choices, such as paperless towels, waterless wipes or good old-fashioned washcloths.

Dear Recycle Lady,

The top on my plastic water bottle says to recycle the bottom top with the bottle. Why doesn't the Recycling Center accept these bottles with the tops on them? What can be done with the plastic tops that are on plastic bottles? Bottled Water Fan

Dear Bottled Water Fan,

Plastic bottle tops and plastic bottles are made from two different kinds of plastic. Each kind of plastic has its own melting point, so must be processed differently. Large cities have special equipment that exposes the plastics to a brief flash of light that identifies each type of plastic and properly sorts them. Unfortunately, the Recycle Center does not have this technology available so must depend on recyclers to remove the bottle tops before putting the bottles in the bins. At the present time there are no manufacturers converting plastic bottle tops into new items, thus plastic bottle caps have no market value. Until there is a use for them, plastic bottle caps go in the trash.

Dear Recycle Lady,

Why are black plastic bottles not recyclable? Likes Black

Dear Likes Black,

Black plastics of all kinds are not recyclable for several reasons. According to greenmatters.com, black plastics contain unknown amounts of toxic chemicals, including heavy metals and flame retardants, and could be hazardous to your health. Also, black plastics creates a problem for recycling centers as they contaminate other plastics. To compound the problem, the black color prevents the light beam from identifying and sorting the various types of plastic. Even worse, black plastic does not biodegrade and will remain in a landfill for millions of years, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

Fun Fact: In 2008, a leatherback sea turtle migrated from Indonesia to Oregon in the United States, an astonishing 12,774 miles across the Pacific - a new record for vertebrates! (fto.com)

Have questions about recycling, or interesting information about recycling? Send questions or requests to recyclelady@greenbrier-swa.com. Dear Recycle Lady is sponsored jointly by the Greenbrier Recycling Center and Greenworks Recycling.