

Recycle Right

Answers to Common Recycling Questions

By Paul Goldberg, Recycling Committee

Ever feel unsure about what you can recycle or where you can recycle it? Well, today we'll be looking at some of those ambiguous and perplexing questions I also have asked in order to recycle right.

Q: What should I do with compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL's)?

A: They can be brought to Wannamaker Hardware (Mass. Ave.) or Shattuck Hardware (Mill St.) for recycling. They cannot be put in your curbside bin and are not trash because they contain mercury.

Q: What about mercury thermometers and thermostats?

A: They can be brought to Wannamaker Hardware, Shattuck Hardware or DPW on Grove St. during normal business hours. You can also bring them to the monthly Saturday Recycling Center at DPW.

Q: Can I recycle hard plastics?

A: Yes! Old lawn chairs, trash cans, recycling bins, outdoor playground equipment, children's toys among many other items can be recycled at the monthly Recycling Center. Infant car seats can also be recycled. Please remove cloth cover, cut off straps, remove buckles and bring all to the Recycling Center. The impact foam and soft foam are trash.

Q: What about Styrofoam?

A: Keep different types separate and bring them to the monthly Recycling Center. Please remove all tape and labels. Clean Styrofoam food containers including coffee cups can also be recycled. Please separate these from the rigid white Styrofoam used for product packaging, coolers, etc. We also accept foam-packing peanuts. Please keep these in a separate bag.

Q: Are old printer cartridges recyclable?

A: DPW will take them on any business day. There's a drop-off box inside their building. They can also be brought to the monthly Recycling Center.

Q: Which batteries can be recycled and which should be thrown in the trash?

A: Alkaline (AA, AAA, C, D) and 9-volt batteries should be thrown in the trash. Rechargeable batteries and button batteries can be brought to Wannamaker or Shattuck Hardware stores or to DPW.

Q: How can you tell which plastic bags can be brought to Stop & Shop or Whole Foods for recycling and which are trash?

A: If the bag when scrunched makes a loud, crinkling sound and is not stretchy, it's trash. Stretchy bags as well as any stretchable plastic film should be clean and dry before bringing them to the supermarket.

Plastic bags should never be placed in curbside recycling. They severely gum up the works at the recycling sorting and separation facility. The one exception is shredded paper, which should be placed in a clear plastic bag, as it can be eyeballed at the recycling facility and then properly sorted.

Arlington Recycling Committee welcomes your involvement as a recycler, as a volunteer at recycling events, or as a committee member. Information can be found at arlingtonma.gov/recycling, or use Town's Request/Answer page. Select "Ask a Question" and choose the "Recycling" category so your question is routed to Arlington's Recycling Coordinator.