

# HOW CAN RECYCLING HELP OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR ENVIRONMENT?

How many times can cardboard be recycled? How many tons of recycled glass goes into making new bottles and jars every year? Can I recycle my plastic bottle with the cap on? Learn the answers to these questions and share these fun facts to teach others why recycling matters.

What you can recycle is different in every community so be sure to check your local program's website for the most up-to-date information.

## Did You Know:

1. The average person creates almost **five pounds of trash per day**, and in **2018, American consumers created 146.2 million tons of trash** that ended up in landfills. Thankfully, Americans also recycled and composted almost 94 million tons of waste – a rate that has grown more than 300% in the past 38 years.
2. Cardboard (also known as corrugated) **boxes can be recycled at least seven times** and can be used to make new packaging boxes and even furniture. The best part is recycling cardboard is easy. Almost all Americans having access to curbside recycling for their corrugated boxes. Just make sure they are empty, dry, clean, and flattened.
3. How long does it take for a used aluminum drink can to be recycled into a new one and put back on the grocery shelf? **Just 60 days.** It's a good thing, too, because Americans love to recycle aluminum cans, which are recycled more often than any other type of drink container and **can be recycled over and over again.**
4. Every year, **2.4 million tons of recycled glass are used to make new bottles and jars.** Recycling glass is great because it can be recycled endlessly with no loss in quality or purity. And for every six tons of recycled container glass used in manufacturing, we can reduce one ton of carbon dioxide emissions, which contribute to climate change.
5. Did you know: Whether you're recycling a plastic drink bottle, shampoo container, peanut butter jar, or laundry detergent bottle, **you can keep the cap on when you put it in your recycle bin in most community programs?** Make sure the plastic containers are empty and dry. When they are processed for recycling, the bottles and caps are ground into plastic flakes that are vigorously washed and separated in a tank where different materials float and sink.



6. The United States annually recycles enough iron and steel scrap metals (known as ferrous scrap), by weight, to **build more than 900 Golden Gate Bridges** — a bridge stretching nearly 9,000 feet.
7. More than **52 million tons of paper** products were recycled in 2018. That's roughly the same weight as almost **350,000 blue whales**.
8. Recycling helps save energy. If you **recycle one glass bottle, it saves enough energy to light a 100-watt bulb for four hours**, power a computer for 30 minutes, or a television for 20 minutes.
9. **Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a 55-inch HDTV to watch your favorite movie.** If we recycled all the aluminum cans in the U.S., the energy saved could power 4.1 million homes for a full year.
10. What happens to recycled plastic containers? They can be used to make new plastic containers, but it doesn't stop there. **Recycled plastic can also be used in creating other things like cell phone cases, playground equipment, clothes, and rugs.**
11. Did you know recycling has always been a part of the process of making paper? Paper, as we know it today, is believed to have originated from China thousands of years ago, made of mulberry bark, hemp, and rags mixed with water, mashed into pulp, pressed, and hung to dry in the sun. Today, paper is made from trees mostly grown on working forests and from recovered paper. **When you recycle your used paper, paper mills use it to make new newspapers, notebook paper, paper grocery bags, corrugated boxes, envelopes, magazines, cartons, and other paper products.**
12. Recycling saves raw materials. For example, over a ton of natural resources are conserved for every ton of glass recycled, including 1,300 pounds of sand, 410 pounds of soda ash, 380 pounds of limestone, and 160 pounds of feldspar.
13. The Gateway Arch in St. Louis used 900 tons of stainless steel in construction — more stainless steel than any project in history at the time it was built. **In the U.S., enough stainless steel is recycled each year to build nearly 1,500 Gateway Arches.**



14. Recycling can make one person's trash another person's treasure! **One metric ton of electronic scrap from personal computers contains more gold than that recovered from 17 tons of gold ore.**
15. Recycling helps our planet and our economy. If all 37.4 million tons of recyclable materials from households were recycled each year, it would reduce greenhouse gas emissions equal to removing 20 million cars from U.S. highways and support the creation of 370,000 jobs.
16. Does your favorite morning drink come in a carton? Well, that carton is a valuable recyclable material! The paper pulp and press board that comes from **recycled cartons can be used to make toilet paper, paper towels, or even eco-friendly building materials like roof cover boards.**

The Recycling Partnership believes we all have a part to play in making our recycling system successful. With more knowledge, we can do our best to make a difference and recycle to the fullest of our abilities. That's why we developed this list of fun recycling facts for kids. Share these fun recycling facts with your friends, and teachers and go over them with your students.

Thanks to the Aluminum Association, American Forest and Paper Association, Association of Plastic Recyclers, Institute for Scrap Recycling Industries, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for providing many of these fun facts.

**SOURCE:** <https://recyclingpartnership.org>