

# A SCHOOL'S GUIDE TO INCREASING RECYCLING PARTICIPATION AND RESULTS



Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle are the key components to a comprehensive school waste reduction program. This guide focuses on recycling, but does not discount the importance of reduction and reuse.

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## BINS & BAGS

### Indoor Bins

#### ***Transform the bins you have***

Easily transform regular trash bins into recycling bins by cutting a round hole in each lid. This is especially useful during special events (sporting events, plays, concerts, etc.). Contact Recycle Montana for details.

#### ***Don't lose your bins***

Mark bins with specific locations so they are returned after being emptied or borrowed (e.g. "Please return to Room 104").

#### ***Liquids***

Place a basin for liquids beside container recycling bins when possible. This will reduce odors, messes, and the weight of your bags. Consider including liquid-capturing basins in the cafeteria and hallways.

#### ***Need extra bins for special events?***

Contact your local recycling or hauling service provider to see if they can provide bins. The local city or county facilities also may have extra bins on hand for their special events.

### Outdoor Bins

#### ***Storage***

Shelter your recyclables so the bins do not become frozen shut or stuck to the ground. This also prevents rain from making paper soggy or attracting biting insects.

**Roll Your Bins**

Installing wheels or setting bins on a rolling cart/dolly makes it easier to move them around.

**Bags****Black vs. Clear**

Use color to further differentiate recycling from trash. Trash bags are typically black, hiding contents. Clear, light blue, or green bags allow recyclables to be quickly identified and placed in the correct bin. This also allows custodial staff to identify grossly contaminated bags which should be discarded with trash.

## TRACKING & REPORTING

**Tracking****Map Your Bins**

Your school probably has fire exit maps already. Use this map to mark recycling bin locations around the school. A laminated map allows students to use dry-erase markers to check off each bin as it is collected and make notes.

**Monitor Bin Usage**

Use the Trash Tracker forms to keep track of how full trash and recycling bins are when they are collected. Use this information to adjust the frequency of collection, as well as the number and sizes of bins purchased in the future. If your program is improving, you will see less trash and more recyclables on your form.

**Conduct a Waste Audit**

The only way to gauge your participation rate is to roll up your sleeves and get dirty. Conduct a waste audit at the beginning of the year to determine what percentage of your trash is reusable, recyclable, and compostable. Then repeat the process at the end of the school year to compare the results and assess your progress. Recycle Montana is available to assist with your waste audit.

**Reporting****Log Your Progress**

Keep a logbook for monthly reporting from your recycling broker. Also, it might be helpful to convert weight to volume – RecycleManiacs.org offers a useful conversion guide.

**Publicize Your Results**

Share the results of any tracking efforts (bin usage, waste audits, weight of material recycled) with parents in your school's newsletter. Include tracking results in morning announcements to keep students updated on their progress and reinforce positive behavior.

**Engage Your Students**

Students often enjoy creating signs and displaying them for other students to see – this adds a second creative project of which students can be proud. Have them create signs too encourage recycling participation as well as report results from tracking/auditing activities.

Students who are included in publicity efforts are likely to take ownership of the actions being promoted, encouraging other students to recycle. Display student-designed signs on and above recycling bins. One popular activity is the creation of a giant thermometer to track the school's recycling progress. Stencils with the chasing arrows recycling symbol allow students to add the recycling symbol to signs & bins around the school.

**Contact Recycle Montana**

We want to know how much recyclable material is being diverted from the waste stream. Drop us a line to share your data and stories.

## LESSON PLANS

**Curriculum*****The Road to the Landfill***

Recycle Montana's own Road to the Landfill outlines a hands-on, "how does it work" investigation of the path of waste from classroom and home to the landfill and more. This plan helps students identify the method and cost of their own waste disposal and the associated environmental implications and protections. The intention is that with an understanding of the process of solid waste management, students will make educated choices on their own solid waste reduction in the future. This lesson has real-world applications in technology, math, careers, environment and geography.

***Waste Audit Demonstration***

Whether or not you choose to conduct a full waste audit for your school, a small-scale demonstration can effectively educate students about the impacts of their behavior (purchasing choices and disposal options).

## KEY PLAYERS

**Custodial Staff*****Training Event***

By organizing a staff training event you can ensure that everyone is aware of acceptable recycling materials, bins locations and specific recycling procedures. This provides the opportunity to answer common questions and share enthusiasm for recycling. When everyone has the correct information, your school's program will be most successful.

***Night Staff***

Night staff can often be kept out of the loop. It is important that the night staff is provided with the same information, tools and encouragement as daytime employees. Distinctly colored or clear bags for

recycling may also help serve as a reminder to recycle even when students and administrators are not present.

## **Kitchen/Cafeteria Staff**

### ***Flatten Containers***

Food service containers are generally large and don't permit recycling bins to be fully utilized – the bins are filled with mostly empty space. By removing both the top and bottom of steel cans, the body can be placed on its side and easily flattened by stepping on it.

### ***Liquid Basins***

Avoid messes, odors and heavy bags by providing a basin next to container recycling bins. Students can dump liquids into the basin and place the empty container in the recycling bin. If no basin is available, it is better to include liquids with trash than recycling since trash is emptied more frequently.

### ***Compost***

Consider starting a recycling program for food waste, better known as Compost. Food waste is the second largest source of municipal solid waste of MSW.

## WORKING WITH HAULERS

### **Local Specifics**

#### ***Acceptable Materials***

Almost everything can be recycled...somewhere. Montana faces many challenges due to its relatively small population spread across a large are, and usually offers fewer recycling options than more densely populated states. Acceptable materials differ from community to community, so be sure to get a clearly defined list from your hauler.

#### ***Lids & Liquids***

As a general rule, empty every container of its contents and toss the lid in the trash.

#### ***Weigh & Report***

Your recycling hauler probably doesn't weigh your materials for fun, but school challenges that require weighed materials are becoming more widespread. It doesn't hurt to ask if they can weigh your recyclables, so you can monitor how the school is generating.

## RECYCLE MONTANA

Our mission is to strive to be the leading statewide voice of recycling and an ongoing resource to advise, support and educate Montanans on waste reduction opportunities. Recycle Montana works to increase recycling in Montana through education and building coalitions between communities, schools and recyclers. Visit [www.recyclemontana.org](http://www.recyclemontana.org) for more information.