

# Paper & Cardboard: What Can (and Cannot) Be Recycled

Sometimes it's hard to know if a paper or cardboard item is ok for recycling. Junk mail? Glossy magazines? Facial tissues? Milk cartons? Gift wrap? What if it has glitter all over it?

Fortunately, the vast majority of the paper and cardboard that we use on a daily basis can be recycled. Generally, as long as it's not lined with a plastic film, coated with wax, or covered in embellishments like glitter, velvet or foil, it's accepted. Labels, plastic windows, staples and a little tape are ok to include.

Here's an overview of what is (and isn't) accepted, followed by explanations:

## ACCEPTED PAPER



Newspapers, Magazines,  
Catalogs  
(glossy paper ok)



Mail  
(plastic windows ok)



Paper  
(shredded ok)



Paper Bags



Plain Greeting  
Cards



Phone Books

## **NON-ACCEPTED ITEMS AND HOW TO DISPOSE OF THEM:**

- Hardcover books, paperbacks: Donate; recycle only ripped out pages; or trash
- Paper towels/napkins/tissues: Food scrap recycling or trash
- Wax or parchment paper: Food scrap recycling or trash
- Coffee/drink cups: Trash
- Coated, leak-proof paper plates: Trash
- Giftwrap laminated with plastic film or embellished with metallics, glitter, velvet, etc: Trash  
[Note: regular, plain paper-only gift wrap is fine to recycle.]
- Photograph paper: Trash

## ACCEPTED CARDBOARD

All cardboard (any color). Some tape is ok, but please remove excessive tape.



Cardboard



Pizza Boxes (clean)



Food Boxes



Household Boxes



Paper Rolls

## **NON-ACCEPTED ITEMS AND HOW TO DISPOSE OF THEM:**

- Soiled pizza boxes: Place soiled part with food scraps or trash, recycle clean part
- Coated paper take-out containers (e.g., take-out boxes with metal handles for rice): Trash
- Refrigerated milk and juice cartons: Place with *commingled* recycling
- Styrofoam packaging: Remove from recyclable boxes and put in trash
- Plastic/Bubble Wrap: Remove from recyclable boxes & bring to store recycling bin or trash

## **WHY STAPLES, PLASTIC WINDOWS, AND SOME TAPE ARE OK:**

Paper mills turn recycled paper and cardboard into new paper and cardboard products, so generally, they want just paper and cardboard and nothing else. However, they have equipment to filter out some foreign items including staples, paper clips, tape, labels, and plastic windows in mail. It's always better to remove these and other contaminants, if possible.

## **WHY THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE NOT ACCEPTED:**

*The following contain too much unwanted non-paper components like plastic or glue, or are "end of life" papers which have already been recycled the maximum number of times:*

**COFFEE/DRINK CUPS:** These cups are lined with a thin plastic film to make them leak-proof and 30% of these "paper" cups is actually plastic. Unfortunately, the paper cannot be separated easily from the plastic lining so these lined cups (and coated paper plates) must go in the trash.

**BEVERAGE CARTONS:** These items go in *commingled* recycling with plastics, glass and metals, even though they look like paper. Milk/juice cartons, juice boxes and ice cream tubs are lined with a plastic film to make them leak-proof. However, unlike coffee/drink cups, paper mills can remove plastic linings from beverage cartons so these cartons can go in commingled recycling.

**BOOKS:** Paperback and hardcover books can't be recycled because of the glue used in the binding. Books should be donated or the pages may be ripped out and put into paper recycling. The binding and cover go in the trash. Phone Books are an exception and go in paper recycling.

**GLOSSY GIFT BAGS:** Gift bags and greeting cards that are very glossy, or are covered with embellishments, are laminated with a plastic film which cannot be separated from the paper.

**FOOD-SOILED PIZZA BOXES:** A little oil is ok, but paper is highly porous. Heavy oil or food residue is hard to remove from paper, so the soiled part (and wax paper liner) must be placed in food scrap recycling or the trash.

**PAPER TOWELS, NAPKINS, TISSUES:** These items are typically made with recycled paper that has already been recycled the maximum number of times and cannot be further recycled into new paper. They can be placed in food scrap recycling as long as there are no cleaning fluids or other chemicals on them, or in the trash.

**WAX/PARCHMENT PAPER:** These are coated with wax and silicone, respectively, which cannot be separated from the paper. Recycle with food scraps or place in the trash.

## **Additional Recycling Resources:**

- Scarsdale Recycling Guide: [LINK](#)
- Scarsdale Sanitation: [publicworks@scarsdale.com](mailto:publicworks@scarsdale.com) or 914.722.1294 (Mon-Sat, 8am-3pm)
- Westchester County Recycling Helpline: 914.813.5425 (Mon-Sun, 9am-7pm)
- Email the CAC [here](#) with questions and read prior sustainability articles [here](#)