



## Common School Recycling Questions and Answers

### 1. Questions: Can paper with staples be recycled? How about paper clips?

**Answers:** Yes. Staples and paper clips are removed at the recycling facility. If possible, before recycling your paper, remove the paper clips for reuse.

### 2. Questions: Is shredded paper recyclable? If so, how should it be handled?

**Answers:**

The answers depend upon the type of shredding equipment you use and upon your recycling hauler.

Paper that is shredded using a single cut "strip" shredder can be recycled. Paper shredded with crosscut "high security" shredders often cannot be recycled. "Strip" shredders produce longer paper fibers than crosscut "high security" shredders.

In their school recycling collection services, most recycling haulers accept shredded paper that has been shredded with a "strip" shredder, that is free of plastic and metal, and that is bagged separately and securely closed in clear plastic bags.

Check with your recycling collection service. If your district or school contracts with a company to provide a shredding service, the written agreement should include recycling as part of the company's service.

### 3. Question: Are straws and caps recyclable?

**Answer:** No. Caps are not recyclable because they can jam the recycling equipment in recycling processing facilities. Straws are not recyclable because the material cannot be readily recycled.



#### 4. Question: Is my coffee cup recyclable?

**Answer:** Most recycling haulers will take paper coffee cups if they are empty and clean – and if lids are removed. Use a durable mug and avoid creating waste in the first place!

#### 5. Question: What types of juice containers can be recycled?

**Answer:** Plastic juice bottles and juice boxes can be recycled if they are empty and if caps and straws are removed.

However, in most schools, ridged plastic juice cups with foil tops and aluminum juice pouches like Capri-Sun **cannot** be placed in your regular recycling containers. However, Capri-Sun containers can be collected for recycling and mailed to TerraCycle, a company that is paying two cents per juice pouch. Visit [www.terracycle.net](http://www.terracycle.net) for more information.

#### 6. Question: What happens if our recycling containers are contaminated with caps, straws and other garbage?

**Answer:** The recycling facility sets a goal for five percent or less contamination. If there is too much contamination in the recycling bin, the entire load may end up in the garbage.

Make sure your students know what belongs in the recycling container. For guidance about how best to educate students about this, see your Green Schools Program representative.

If a recycling container does not have a sticker with information about what recyclable materials belong in the container, tell your Green Schools representative and he or she will send you the appropriate sticker(s). Make sure that the sticker on each recycling container does not face the wall, but instead faces the students, whether in the lunchroom or the classroom.

#### 7. Questions: How should we deal with leftover liquids? How can we recycle milk cartons?

**Answer:** Please see the *Milk Carton Recycling* guide on the [Recycling Toolkit page](#) of the Green Schools Program website.



**King County**

Department of  
Natural Resources and Parks  
**Solid Waste Division**