

Frequently Asked Questions

What is recycling?

Recycling is the recovery of useful materials, such as paper, glass, plastic and metals. At ASU, most of the waste stream comprises recyclable items. Learn what you can recycle at ASU by using the [Waste Directory tool](#).

What happens after I throw my waste in the recycling bin?

From an ASU recycling bin, recyclable materials are collected by custodial services, centralized in compactors, and sent to a materials recovery facility. The materials are sorted by type, baled together to form easily transportable cubes and sold on the open market.

What is composting and how do you compost at ASU?

Composting is a form of recycling where organic materials are returned to the soil. Composting involves diverting food scraps from the landfill and having microorganisms, bacteria and insects help break down the organic matter into nutrient-rich compost. If you live in select ASU residential communities or work in an ASU office, you can join the [Compost Program](#). Another option is the outdoor compost bins on campus near the [Memorial Union](#) and [Student Pavilion](#).

Which recycling bin am I supposed to use?

Using the correct recycling bin helps ensure that materials are properly sorted and processed, which helps reduce waste, conserve resources, and protect the environment. Additionally, using the correct bin can also help reduce the amount of waste that ends up in landfills, which can help reduce the environmental impact of waste disposal.

If you are unsure which bin to use, check out ASU's [Waste Directory tool](#). We have cataloged over a hundred items you may need to discard and how to align them with the correct bin.

Which items can I swap out for reusables?

Reusable swaps are a great way to reduce waste. Here are some common reusable swaps you can make:

- Refillable coffee pods instead of disposable coffee pods.
- Reusable cloth napkins instead of paper napkins.
- Reusable coffee cups instead of disposable cups.
- Reusable food storage containers instead of disposable plastic containers.
- Reusable shopping bags instead of disposable plastic bags.
- Reusable straws instead of plastic straws.
- Reusable water bottles instead of single-use plastic bottles.

Is all plastic recyclable?

No, not all types of plastic are recyclable. Just because plastic is labeled with a recycling symbol does not necessarily mean it can be recycled in your area. It's essential to check with your local recycling program to see which types of plastics they accept for recycling and what bin to use.



Find out what you can [recycle at ASU](#).

How can I live a zero-waste lifestyle?

Starting a zero-waste journey can be overwhelming at first, but there are simple steps you can take to reduce waste and live more sustainably. Here are some tips to get started:

1. Switch to reusable options instead of single-use plastics.
2. Compost food waste.
3. Choose package-free options.
4. Repair items.
5. Know how to dispose of your waste properly.

Remember, a zero-waste journey is a process; starting small and being consistent is important. Celebrate your successes along the way and keep working towards reducing waste in your life.

How and where can I recycle a generic plastic bag?

A plastic bag is considered a soft plastic. You can reuse these bags for other purposes, and most of them can be recycled at [select ASU locations](#) or at your local grocery stores.

What is the circular economy?

The circular economy is an economic system change in how we produce, assemble, sell and use products to minimize waste and reduce our environmental impact. This includes boosting local markets to create a closed-loop resource system within the local community where resources are kept in use for as long as possible and waste is minimized.

Check out [ASU's Circular Resource System Goal](#).