

OAKRIDGER

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Here's what Oak Ridgers should and shouldn't throw in their recycle bins

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In mid-2024, a community survey commissioned by the [city of Oak Ridge](#) asked residents this question: “What is the most important thing you think Oak Ridge can do to improve the quality of waste and [recycling services](#)?” More than 20% of respondents cited the need to “Improve communication about collection schedules and guidelines.”

Most of Oak Ridgers' recycling waste is used in new products

Here are the latest guidelines compiled by Robin Graham, the new chair of the Environmental Quality Advisory Board (EQAB).

What to recycle in Oak Ridge

All forms of paper (no need to remove staples or glue), including paper envelopes, even those with clear windows (but not paper mailing envelopes with plastic bubble lining)

Any form of cardboard (including slightly soiled pizza and other boxes)

All empty aluminum cans

Any empty steel can or container

Any empty plastic container or bottle labeled as recyclable #1 or #2 or PET, PETE, HDPE (it's okay to leave the plastic cap on the bottle)

Empty used paper or cardboard cups or containers (e.g., milk or juice cartons with plastic screw caps removed and paper-based coffee cups)

What *not* to recycle

Plastic bags, especially plastic garbage bags

Aluminum foil and lightweight aluminum tins (e.g., aluminum pie plates)

Non-ferrous (iron-free) metal (other than aluminum cans)

Glass, glass jars, glass bottles

What to *really* avoid recycling

Items that are heavily soiled

Plastic bags (from stores) and items like rope or cords that can tangle or wrap in recycling equipment (do not put recyclables in plastic trash bags)

Containers that are not empty