

## Apartment Collection and Recycling Guide:

**Aim of the Guide: for more people living in apartment blocks to become environmentally aware and start taking responsible steps towards the preservation of the environment.**

### Introduction

Whether you live in a house, trailer home, or apartment, recycling can be practiced easily. Recycling is a major component and a good way to contribute to the environment. If you feel like it can be difficult to recycle in your apartment, or to get people living in the same apartment block as you live in to be onboard, here are some tips so that you can get a recycling programme going within your complex.

### Getting Started

An important starting point to setting up an effective recycling programme in your apartment complex is to establish what can be recycled, and to know what the volume of those materials are currently thrown away in your waste bins.

**1. Conduct a waste audit**

Survey your apartment's communal rubbish area over a period of a week or two, and record exactly what is going into waste bins. Establish which of those items are recyclable, get an idea of the volumes and then decide which ones you want to include in your apartment block recycling initiative according to a list of priorities.

**2. Appoint a coordinator**

It is of key importance to appoint a coordinator to oversee and organise such a programme. This person should ideally be enthusiastic about sustainability and willing to help plan and see the entire recycling initiative through.

**3. Focus your attention**

You'll make the biggest impact if you focus on 'easy-to-recycle' materials. Here are a few suggestions:

- #1 plastic (water bottles)
- #2 plastic (milk jugs)



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- Cardboard
- Aluminium and steel cans
- Newspaper and office paper
- Glass

See the National Recycling Forum's website for info about what can and can't be recycling in SA:  
[www.recycling.co.za](http://www.recycling.co.za)

#### 4. Consult with management

A successful recycling initiative needs to be strongly supported by top management, who would have to approve the programme and the communication efforts needed to motivate tenants to participate. Your landlord should also be able to answer your questions as to why there isn't already a recycling program available in the complex. There may not be a contractor available in the area to pick up the recycling or the contractor may be too pricey, and rent would have to be raised across the board for the complex to be able to afford the program. They may also be able to tell you whether previous attempts at starting a program have failed to give you an idea as to whether your efforts will prove worthwhile.

### Encouraging Participation

If you want to pursue the chance of a recycling program in your apartment complex, you'll have to ask your neighbours for their opinion. Explain why you believe strongly in a recycling service and ask them if they'd be willing to pay a bit more each month in order to have the service provided. Ask them what the maximum is that they'd be willing to pay extra in order to have the service and let them know you won't be able to push the service through without their support.

Once you have an estimate on how much, if any, your neighbours would be willing to contribute monthly to offset a recycling program cost, do some research into local recycling contractors that would offer service to your area. Make phone calls and ask for weekly, biweekly or monthly pickup estimates, being sure to tell them approximately how many apartments and residents live in the complex.

If your apartment complex has regular board meetings, this is the place to present your case. Attend the next meeting and show your petition to demonstrate how much support you have for the program. You can then present the quotes you got from contractors for the board members' consideration. The decision will then rest with the board. Ask any of your neighbours who were especially supportive to show up for the meeting to help encourage the board to decide favourably.

If your apartment complex doesn't have a board, you should present the same facts to your landlord, preferably with your supportive neighbours' help. Your landlord can then discuss the idea with the owner of the complex and see if they can agree on a plan of action. Don't be disappointed if the motion doesn't go through; not all your neighbours may agree that the additional expense is worth the extra rent.

To prevent waste and collect contaminant-free recyclables, your participating tenants must be knowledgeable about programme guidelines and the benefits of participating. PETCO offers a wide range of educational material (posters, DVD's, and PET collection bags for special events) detailing the PET recycling process.



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Track progress and inform tenants about the successes achieved. You could consider incentives or rewards to help raise awareness and entrench the recycling habit.

If a recycling program in your apartment complex is not possible, you can still look for ways in which to recycle on your own. Take your recycling to a local recycling centre once a week or so, reduce the amount of waste you use and re-use what you can, even if you must think creatively.

## Logistics

Considerations about the logistics of a recycling programme, and the methods of collection and disposal include among others:

### Space requirements

- Issues of space and temporary storage can become a problem if not included in the programme's detailed plan. Identify a suitable area where the recyclable materials may be stored during the collection phase (before being picked up or taken off site). Take PET plastic bottles as an example: since they are filled with air, they take up a large volume, even though their mass is relatively low. The same is true for some other recyclables such as beverage cans. If a method is available to squash the bottles and cans, it is advisable to do this, as this would save space and more could be collected for one load.
- The site should be secure and not be in the way of anyone. It should nevertheless also be easily accessible to the vehicles those who transport the materials off site.
- Relevant health, safety and fire prevention standards should be considered and implemented.

### Delivery or collection?

- One of the most important parts of the process is deciding how to dispose of recyclable materials. Do you take it away yourself, or will you have it collected?
- Decide whether you are going to do detailed separation at source. For instance, there are many different types of paper (such as printer paper, newspapers, magazines, cardboard, and construction paper). The same is true of the different kinds of plastics, glass and metals. Should you separate each specific type, it could make your recyclables more valuable. Discuss this with the specific recycling organisations and collectors. It may be necessary to choose different ways of disposal for different materials, depending on the nature and volumes of the specific waste materials that your apartment block must manage. Talk to PETCO about the most effective way of recycling PET beverage bottles.
- You could also collect all paper products in one bin, plastics in another, etc. This method is called co-mingled collection and means less work, but materials could be contaminated easily when they are mingled together. Again, it is important to know how and where such co-mingled recyclables could be deposited or collected.
- Volumes are key to the decision about disposal and collection. PET plastic and many other materials need to be collected in large volumes in order to make it viable for the collector. Where large volumes of recyclables are not collected, you will need to arrange your own delivery.
- You could organise to undertake disposal at a drop-off centre – this means using your own vehicles or organising transport when enough volumes have been collected at regular intervals.
- You may have to hire an outside recycling service. This will depend on the size of your company, as many commercial recyclers require a volume of waste that could be more than



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your company generates. Consider partnering with other companies in the same building or area to share the costs.

- Municipal drop-off sites do not pay for recyclables, but if you collect significant volumes, you could contact a recycler close to you for rates and delivery/collection options. A current list of municipal drop-off sites is found on [www.petco.co.za/find-a-recycling-drop-off-site](http://www.petco.co.za/find-a-recycling-drop-off-site). If you want to maximize your recycling programme and become a local drop-off centre, you can advertise the service to other local businesses: they could then deliver their PET plastic to you for recycling. Contact [info@petco.co.za](mailto:info@petco.co.za) for advice in this regard.
- Another viable option is donating to charities. Many local organisations will offer to come pick up recycled materials, such as books, electronics and other materials.

## Recycling Tips

- Check that there is no PVC shrink-wrap label, as this means that the container not recyclable
- Do not flake the bottles
- PET trays and punnets are currently not being recycled on a large scale as not all of them are identifiable and many are made of mixed polymers or with additives, thus making recycling difficult. Check with your collector / recycler upfront.
- **Do not** rinse the bottle during collection, the bottle goes through a number of washes when being recycled and therefore rinsing beforehand is a waste of water.
- Keep the cap on the bottle as it can be recycled and turned into other products.

## What is PET plastic?



PET is the short name for **Polyethylene Terephthalate**, the type of plastic labelled with the #1 polymer identification code (in a triangle) on or near the bottom of bottles and containers. It is recognisable as an imprint on containers (transparent, clear and/or tinted or any other solid colour). PET is mainly used for **beverage bottles** for (bottled water, carbonated soft drinks, milk, juice, sports and energy drinks), **bottles** for household, personal care and pharmaceutical products **jars, punnets, tubs and trays** for food items, as well as **sheet and film** for packaging.

In South Africa empty, thrown away PET bottles are collected, then flattened and bundled up into big blocks (baled) and delivered to the recycling plant where they are colour sorted, washed, chopped into smaller particles (granulated), re-washed, and extruded (melted down and then made into long thin strings of plastic). Those strings are then cut into small pieces (pellets), before those are then re-used (as recycled plastics) for making a number of items we enjoy every day including fiber filling for our pillows, sleeping bags and winter coats, carpets in cars, fleece shirts but most importantly as recycled PET containers.

Once recycled, from either pre-consumer (such as factory off-cuts) or post-consumer (household) material sources, it is called rPET or Recycled Polyethylene Terephthalate.

## Why collect and recycle PET Plastics?



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PET is technically 100% recyclable. It is lightweight and strong and can be transported efficiently and is superior compared to other packaging options with regard to its environmental footprint linked to energy demand in production and resulting Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions.

When recycled PET can further greatly reduce fuel use, energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. PET recycling creates jobs by providing a source of income and helps to save the planet's virgin resources.

The PET that is removed from the waste stream results in less waste going to landfill sites and reduces the amount of natural resources needed to make certain products, thereby reducing the impact on the Earth and environment. Recycling of PET fits very well into the concept of the Circular Economy, and closed loop thinking which looks at a cradle-to-cradle approach and aims to design waste out of a system by ensuring that waste from one product or process becomes a resource for another. This reduces the need for additional resource use and eliminates waste from the outset.

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

- 1 recycled plastic bottle saves enough energy to power a 60-watt incandescent light bulb for 3 hours.
- Five 2-liter recycled PET bottles produce enough fibrefill to make a winter jacket.
- The energy saved by recycling one plastic bottle will power a computer for 25minutes.  
Recycling 10 tons of PET plastic saves as much greenhouse gas emissions as removing more than three cars from

### **Who is PETCO and how can we support you?**

PETCO is the national industry body responsible for managing the PET industry's extended producer responsibility (EPR) in South Africa. Our mission is to grow the collection and recycling of PET bottles after consumer use. We have done this for a decade, and are funded by a voluntary recycling levy paid by industry. We invest all our funds in ensuring and encouraging visible recycling, through:

- Contracting and financing PET recyclers who collect bottles, process them into rPET in preparation for the manufacture of new products
- Consumer education and awareness (including schools and community groups)
- Training and joint venture projects (including those with municipalities)
- Equipment support and sponsorship (for collectors), and
- Providing guidance relating to design for recycling (for industry).



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PETCO offers educational material such as posters, DVD's, and PET collection bags for events that detail the PET recycling process. You can also apply to hire banners to be returned after any specific collection or recycling school or community event.

## Contact PETCO for further information

**Call toll free:** 0860 147 738 (0860 1 is PET)  
**Email:** info@petco.co.za  
**Twitter:** PETCO\_SA  
**Facebook:** PETPlasticRecyclingSA  
**Instagram:** PETCO\_SA  
**Website:** www.petco.co.za

## Useful contacts

Visit [www.petco.co.za](http://www.petco.co.za) for a list of collection points, drop off sites and buy-back centres.

You could also contact some other industry bodies for general assistance or information about other material streams. Here are some of them, but you could also visit PETCO's website to download a fact sheet with useful contacts:

- Institute of Waste Management [www.iwmsa.co.za](http://www.iwmsa.co.za)
- National Recycling Forum [www.recycling.co.za](http://www.recycling.co.za)
- Packaging SA [www.packagingsa.co.za](http://www.packagingsa.co.za)
- Recycle Paper ZA [www.recyclepaper.co.za/](http://www.recyclepaper.co.za/)
- Polyolefin Recycling Company (POLYCO) [www.polyco.co.za](http://www.polyco.co.za)
- Polystyrene Packaging Council (PSPC) [www.polystyrenepackaging.co.za/](http://www.polystyrenepackaging.co.za/)
- ROSE Foundation [www.rosefoundation.org.za](http://www.rosefoundation.org.za)
- SAVA [www.savinyls.co.za](http://www.savinyls.co.za)
- Tetra Pak [www.tetrapak.com/za](http://www.tetrapak.com/za)
- The Glass Recycling Company [www.glassrecyclingcompany.co.za](http://www.glassrecyclingcompany.co.za)
- Collect-a-Can [www.collectacan.co.za](http://www.collectacan.co.za)



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