

Plastics by number



Recyclable plastics are labelled with a number inside three arrows that form a triangle. Sometimes you will also see letters beside the symbol to identify the type of plastic (e.g. PET, LDPE). Numbers 1-7 are recyclable to various degrees, depending on your town or city's recycling program. The safest plastics to reuse are #2, #4, and #5 (sing it: 2, 4, 5 keep yourself alive)! That means, #1, #3, #6, and #7 are best purchased in moderation and recycled after ONE use.

1 PET (polyethylene terephthalate) DO NOT REUSE

In most water and pop bottles, and some packaging. Hard to de-contaminate. Proper cleaning releases harmful chemicals. May leach carcinogens like DEHA.

2 HDPE (high-density polyethylene) REUSEABLE

In milk, detergent and oil bottles, toys, and plastic bags. Considered one of the safest forms of plastic.

3 PVC (vinyl/polyvinyl chloride) DO NOT REUSE

In food wraps, food oil bottles, teething rings, pet toys, and blister packaging. Produces toxins from manufacture through disposal. Avoid microwaving (use glass or microwave-safe crockery instead); wraps made from LDPE (#4s) are safer.

4 LDPE (low-density polyethylene) DO NOT REUSE

In shrink wraps, garment bags (from dry cleaners), squeezable bottles, and plastic bags. Less toxic than other plastics.

5 PP (polypropylene) REUSEABLE

In bottle tops, disposable diapers, carpeting, bags, food wraps, yogurt and margarine containers. Considered one of the safest plastics.

6 PS (polystyrene) AVOID USE

In plastic cutlery and foam packaging. May leach into food products.

7 Other (LEXAN, polycarbonate, BPA aka bisphenol A) DO NOT REUSE

Usually layered or mixed plastics. For info on BPA, see: ewg.org/bpa/tipstoavoidbpa