



All About Milk Carton Recycling

How can milk cartons be recycled at my school?

Milk cartons can be recycled in marked recycling containers in the lunchroom.



- The milk cartons must be emptied first and the straws must be thrown in the garbage.
- Line the milk carton recycling container with a clear plastic bag. To help prevent spills, full plastic bags should be tied at the top before being placed in the outdoor recycling dumpster.
- On each recycling container, place a lid with a hole cut in the middle. King County provides lids with holes cut to accommodate bottles, cans and milk cartons.
- In most school lunchrooms, milk cartons can be mixed with plastic bottles, aluminum cans and juice boxes in the same recycling containers. Place signs on both the recycling container and the leftover liquids bucket. The Green Schools Program provides these signs. Visit the [Recycling Toolkit](#) page to see the recycling sticker document.

How can leftover liquids be disposed?

To dispose of leftover liquids, dump them down an indoor sanitary sewer drain, and not into an outdoor storm drain which typically empties into a local lake. Sinks and floor drains in custodial areas and kitchens usually are sanitary sewer drains.

To collect leftover liquids in the lunchroom, here are two options:

1. A five-gallon bucket placed next to the recycling container. If the bucket seems too low, try setting it on a milk crate or table.
 - Benefits of this approach include the ease of bucket removal and disposal. Because they are light and don't hold too much liquid, it's not difficult to take them to an indoor drain to be dumped.
 - A disadvantage is that milk can sometimes splash over the edge of the bucket during dumping.

2. A 32-gallon container with a funnel lid, placed next to the recycling container.

- Benefits of this approach are less splashing and ability to wheel the container to a drain after use.
- A disadvantage is the potential weight of a large bucket of liquids.

How can milk splashes be prevented?

- Encourage students to finish their milk. This is the best option because then there will be less leftover liquid in the first place!
- Remind students to take care when dumping leftover milk.
- Keep a mop nearby to quickly and easily clean up spills.
- Place a paint screen, colander, or strainer on top of the leftover liquids bucket. Some schools report that this significantly cuts down on splashing.

What can be done to control odor?

- Remind students about the need to empty milk cartons completely before putting them in the recycling container.
- To prevent spills, use a clear plastic bag liner for the milk carton recycling container and then tie the full plastic bags tightly before taking them to the outdoor recycling dumpster.



- When placing milk carton bags in the outdoor recycling dumpster, make sure they are upright so that any remaining milk residue does not spill out.
- Call the school's waste hauler and ask them to come and clean the dumpster out or switch it for a new one. There may be a fee for this service, so check with the hauler.



King County

Department of
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