



Can milk cartons be recycled at my school?

The answer depends on your school district. As of September 2021:

- Schools in Auburn and Federal school districts cannot recycle milk cartons due to new city-hauler contracts for recycling collection services.
- Schools in other districts can recycle milk cartons. See steps and tips below. Ask the Green Schools Program for help.

Empty milk cartons can be placed in marked recycling bins.



- Leftover liquids must be emptied before the empty milk carton is placed in the recycling bin. If your school provides straws, all straws must be placed in a garbage can.
- Milk cartons can be placed in the same recycling bins with plastic bottles and aluminum cans.
- Place signs on each recycling bin and each leftover liquids container.
 - Visit [Recycling Toolkit](#) to see recycling bins and signs provided by the Green Schools Program for schools participating in the program.
- On each recycling bin, you may want to place a lid with a hole cut in the middle. Ask the Green Schools Program about lids to accommodate bottles, cans, and milk cartons.
- Consider lining the milk carton recycling bin with a clear plastic bag. However, some haulers (such as Waste Management) require all recyclable materials to be loose (not in bags) when placed in the outdoor recycling dumpster or container.

How can milk splashes be prevented?

- *Best practice:* Encourage students to finish their milk, so there will be less leftover liquid!
- Remind students to be careful – “pour low and slow” – when emptying leftover milk.
- Place a paint screen, colander, or strainer on top of the leftover liquids bucket. Some schools report this significantly cuts down on splashing. Keep a mop nearby to clean up any spills.
- If you line recycling bins with clear plastic bags, tie the full plastic bags of milk cartons (and other recyclable materials) at the top before placing in outdoor recycling containers.



How can leftover liquids be disposed?

Pour leftover liquids 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, here are two options:

1. Place a 5-gallon bucket placed next to the recycling bin. If the bucket is too low, try setting it on a milk crate or table.
 - Benefits: Easy to carry and empty a full 5-gallon bucket because it is light.
 - Disadvantage: Milk can splash over the edge of the bucket during dumping.
2. Place a 32-gallon container with a funnel lid next to the recycling bin.
 - Benefits: Less splashing and ability to wheel the container to a drain after use.
 - Disadvantage: Weight of a large container of liquids.

What can be done to control odor?

Milk can cause odors in a garbage bin or in a recycling bin. Here are a few tips about controlling odors.

- Remind students to empty milk cartons completely before placing them in the recycling bin.
- Use a clear plastic bag liner for the recycling bin, and, if your hauler accepts bagged recyclable materials, tie the bag tightly before taking it to the outdoor recycling container or dumpster.
- Periodically ask the school's hauler to clean the outdoor dumpster/container or replace it with a clean dumpster/container. There may be a fee for this service, so check with the hauler.