

# THE RECYCLE STORY

**W**hat happens when you throw a plastic bottle in the trash can? It all depends on which trash can. If you throw a bottle in a regular garbage pail, it will probably wind up in a landfill. A landfill is basically a big hole in the ground that is used as a garbage dump. Garbage goes in and gets covered over.

However, if you throw your plastic bottle in a recycling can, something very different happens. That bottle gets remade into new plastic. It will have another life as a toy or carpet or clothing. In 2001, a little less than 30% of the **waste** in the United States was recycled. That's a figure from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Follow the pictures below to see what happens to a recycled plastic bottle.



## The Recycling Center

At the recycling center, plastic bottles of all sorts are collected. They are sorted by color and type.



ARTHUR TILEY/GETTY IMAGES



## The Bottle Crusher

Bottles of the same type are crushed into bundles. These bundles are being loaded onto a big truck. Then they are taken to a **processing plant**.



MAURIZIO GAMBARINI/NEWS.COM



## Good-bye, Bottles!

The old bottles are put into machines that break them into tiny pieces.



HANK MORGAN/PHOTO RESEARCHERS



## Hello, Plastic!

The pieces are washed and melted. The melted plastic is shaped into balls.



RICHARD HUTCHINGS/PHOTO EDIT



## A New Life

The tiny balls of plastic are packed in barrels and sent to factories. They can be made into lots of things, like **fleece** clothing. This playground equipment was made from recycled plastic.



LANDSCAPE STRUCTURES INC.

## Reader's Response

- 1 Do you think it is better to throw a plastic bottle into a trash can or a recycling can? Would the author agree?
- 2 Some communities provide services for collecting recyclable materials, and some do not. What do you think might keep a community from taking part in recycling programs?

## Writer's Response

- 1 How do the pictures help you understand the recycling process better?
- 2 How do the subtitles that go along with the pictures fit each step?
- 3 Describe the author's tone.

## Be the Writer

This article describes a process, or steps in doing something. Think of a process you are familiar with, such as making a sandwich. Use the format of this article to write the steps in the process. Draw pictures to illustrate the steps. Reread your steps. Make sure you haven't left anything out!

## Words to Know

waste

fleece

processing

## From the Writer

Accuracy matters. Whether you are giving an important safety demonstration that could save lives or simply telling a story about what happened to you on the way to school, getting the facts straight is an important task. When your readers are depending on your information, you want to be responsible about checking out what you're writing. But even when the information doesn't seem to matter, using inaccurate information can cause your readers to lose trust in you.

While there are a lot of information sources out there, some are more reliable than others. Think about "The Recycle Story." The author could have asked a neighbor who had a recycling bin outside or a member of the town council about waste and recycling. Those people might have had a little information, but they probably wouldn't have known the whole story. Instead, the author looked for information about waste from a source who has a lot of knowledge about the topic. And the photographs of the process show that someone, maybe the author herself, actually went to a recycling center and gathered information.

When you are writing, you may not be able to take a field trip to go straight to the source. But you have lots of resources at the library and on the Internet to help you. Pick sources that you can trust and that are up-to-date. Double-check your facts. Getting your facts straight will make you a reliable source of information for your readers.