



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where can I locate the plastic code?

The plastic code is usually located on the bottom or side of your container.

2. What if I don't see a plastic code?

If there is no code available or you are unsure about the plastic type, treat your container as regular solid waste. Ensure containers for recycling are uncontaminated, empty, clean, and dry.

3. What if I know the plastic composition but I don't know the plastic code?

A [Plastic-Code-Ref-Sheet \(PDF\)](#) is available for you to classify and identify the plastic code for your container.

4. What if I see an NFPA warning on a bottle?

We can only accept plastic containers where all of the squares (Flammability, Instability, Health, and Special Hazard) have a number of 0 or 1. NFPA ratings 0-1 are non-regulated under the [Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System \(WHMIS\)](#). See Q&A below for how to dispose of plastic with NFPA ratings >1.

5. How do I dispose of "contaminated" plastic containers?

For all hazardous waste items refer to Safety & Risk Services' [Hazardous Waste Management](#) webpage.

6. How clean does the plastic have to be?

Whether recycling or disposing in the garbage, plastic containers should have no residue. We recommend rinsing your containers up to 3 times to achieve cleanliness.

7. Why can't I recycle lab specific plastic items like vials, tubes, syringes, pipettes/tips, etc.?

Due to potential occupational health and safety concerns related to handling of such items, workers at recycling facility will dispose of these in the garbage even if they are clean and uncontaminated with hazardous materials.



8. What are the best types of recyclable plastic?

Choose the best plastics codes: 1 (PETE), 2 (HDPE), 4 (LDPE), and 5 (PP). Also choose natural colours, clear or white. This is due to their good recyclability, safety and high value on the global recycling market.

9. What are the worst types of recyclable plastic?

Avoid the worst plastics codes: 3 (PVC), 6 (PS), and 7 (other including PLA). Also avoid bright or dark colours, including black. This is due to their poor recyclability, risk of chemical leaching (health risk, e.g. #7 contains bisphenol-A/BPA), and low market value.

10. How about compostable or biodegradable plastic?

Avoid compostable plastic and biodegradable plastic as they are non-recyclable and incompatible with UBC's composting system.

11. What else can I do if I can't recycle certain plastic codes or unmarked plastic?

Try to purchase products that come in sustainable packaging (paper, cardboard, etc.). Contact your vendors to inquire about other options.

12. Who is UBC's plastic recycling provider?

UBC's plastic is picked up by a local commercial service provider that sorts the plastics at its own facility. Once sorted, these plastics are then shipped to other companies, where the actual processing is done.

13. What if there are no large UBC plastic recycling bins in my area?

Contact your Building Operations [Facilities Manager](#) to request a bin closer to your area.

14. What if the large UBC plastic recycling bin is full?

Contact your Building Operations [Facilities Manager](#) to arrange a collection.