

# DON'T TANGLE OR CONTAMINATE RECYCLE MORE FOR A GREENER STATE



## TALKING POINTS

Quick training guide for recycling experts and educators from Material Recovery Facilities, local governments, haulers, schools and other recycling entities to replace common negative recycling messaging with positive alternatives.

1

### WHAT NOT TO SAY:

“Education doesn’t help.  
You can’t reduce contamination.”

### WHAT THEY HEAR:

Recycling is hopeless.



### SAY THIS INSTEAD:

Contamination is a reality but data and experience prove that we **CAN** reduce it through consistent, sustained education and improvements in sorting technology. The recycling industry didn’t develop with standardization in mind; it was a local grassroots effort in individual communities with unique and varied collection and sorting systems, facilities, technology and support. Education is the way we help encourage best practices and refine the public’s sorting skills. **Recycling education works!**

2

### WHAT NOT TO SAY:

“Don’t worry about if you put that item in the recycling. We will sort it out for you. We don’t have a hard answer on that item. It constantly changes and is up for debate.”

### WHAT THEY HEAR:

What I do doesn’t matter.



### SAY THIS INSTEAD:

“When in doubt, throw it out **OR** give us a shout!” If you know your no’s and your yes’s, you really help Joey on the line and make their job easier. You are the first sorters — we **NEED** you to make the right choice.

3

### WHAT NOT TO SAY:

“No one wants these jobs.”

### WHAT THEY HEAR:

Then why am I doing this?



### SAY THIS INSTEAD:

This is a hard job, so let’s take care of our people. North Carolina hosts 16,200 recycling related jobs. We must update our sorting technology and decrease contamination so that the quality of these jobs is improved. So, help the workers by knowing what goes into the recycling bin and what to throw out!

4

**WHAT NOT TO SAY:**

“Recycling isn’t that important.”

**WHAT THEY HEAR:**

Recycling isn’t that important.



**SAY THIS INSTEAD:**

Recycling is very important! There are soon to be nine billion people in the world. Our landfills are filling up! We have the opportunity to enhance domestic recycling markets and keep waste out of landfills and out of international waters. It is our responsibility to create jobs in the United States and reclaim resources like paper, plastic, metal and glass rather than making products and packaging out of virgin materials and burying those discarded resources in a hole in the ground.

5

**WHAT NOT TO SAY:**

“Look for the recycling symbol or the numbers 1-7.”

**WHAT THEY HEAR:**

If it has a number on it or the recycling symbol, it is recyclable.



**SAY THIS INSTEAD:**

Numbers don’t matter; what we can process does. When it comes to plastic, recycle by shape: bottles, tubs, jugs and jars are recyclable.

**Remember:** Can we process it? Do we have a buyer? Technology and markets determine if something is recyclable. Is the item made out of a material that our machines and people can easily process? If it is small, dirty or atypical, it isn’t recyclable.

6

**WHAT NOT TO SAY:**

“We aren’t making money on our materials.”

**WHAT THEY HEAR:**

This is a waste of time, energy and money.



**SAY THIS INSTEAD:**

Markets might be down right now and some materials may not be returning the profits we would like, but recycling is the right thing to do and Americans **LOVE** to recycle! We have spent decades and dollars supporting recycling infrastructure and educating the public. Now, we must stop shipping our recycling overseas and instead help support and grow our domestic markets and local jobs by supplying the clean recyclables they need.

