

# Ready, set, SORT! A recycling study

To make sure that our City is recycling right and recovering as much of our recyclable material as possible, Long Beach conducts studies called “waste sorts.” These special studies involve selecting samples of our community’s garbage, sorting out the recyclable materials from the non-recyclable materials, and categorizing recyclable materials by type.

These sorts help researchers understand how much of what can be recycled is actually being recycled, and how much is being lost.

Ready to conduct a waste sort at home?

## Materials Needed

- A tarp or other flat surface that can be easily cleaned
- Old clothing or a smock that can get dirty
- Gloves or tongs
- Something to write with
- A copy of the Long Beach Recycling Guidelines (page 13)
- One day’s worth of garbage from your home\*

**\*IMPORTANT:** Please request assistance or notify an adult before starting.

Continue with your research on the next page by following steps 1 through 4!



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## Step 1. Prepare your study area

Sorting waste sounds like a messy job, and it is! That's why it's important to prepare your study area before you begin. Here are the steps you should take to make sure that your study is tidy and safe.

- (1) Clear a spot on the ground, either outside or in an area that can be easily swept clean, such as a concrete or tiled floor.
- (2) Lay down an old sheet, tarp, or flattened garbage bag. This is where you will spread out your study sample in order to count recyclable items.
- (3) You can wear gloves or use kitchen tongs to keep garbage off of your hands and clothes. Otherwise, make sure to wash your hands with soap and water every time you touch an item from your sample.



## Step 2. Select your study sample

In order to see what kinds of recyclables end up in your family's garbage bin, you will need to examine what your family tends to throw away.

A good way to get this information is to take a "sample" of the garbage produced in your home. In most cases, this can be done by selecting one garbage container at the end of a normal day. If your family does not produce much waste, you may want to wait two or three days in order to have enough material to sort through.

Once you have selected a sample that has plenty of items to sort, but is not too big to handle, you can take it out of the container and spread it on the sheet or tarp that you prepared in Step 1. Ask a parent or other adult for assistance if you see sharp or wet items that could prick your skin or stain your clothing.



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## (3) Investigate and clean up

When you look at your study sample, what do you see? How many of the items in the sample pile are also on the list of recyclable materials? Use the boxes below to count up the recyclable items in your sample.

Place one mark for each item that you see in each category.

For example, if you see a piece of paper, make a mark under "Paper & Cardboard."



When you are finished counting all of the recyclable items in your sample, count up the marks in each box to get your study results.

| Paper & Cardboard | Plastic Bottles, Jugs & Tubs | Metal Cans & Aluminum | Glass Bottles & Jars |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| TOTAL:            | TOTAL:                       | TOTAL:                | TOTAL:               |

**Finished counting? Put the items where they belong!**

## (4) Share your results and commit to making a change!

Commit to making a change to reduce waste and recycle right at home. Share your results and commitment with your family and friends to inspire more people to recycle right in Long Beach!