

The Gainesville Zero Waste News

To Crush, or Not to Crush? That is the Question.

For a long-time, recyclers were told to crush aluminum cans and flatten milk cartons before recycling them to save space in the bins. While this recycling practice worked then, it is no longer necessary or preferred. **Crushing your bottles or cans actually makes it much harder to sort recyclables at the materials processing facility** and can lower the quality and value of the recyclables when they go to market.

Modern recycling sorting machinery largely depends on the shape and weight of each material to separate a recyclable into its correct category. When a bottle or can is crushed or flattened, it can contaminate other recyclable materials. For example, if an aluminum soda can is crushed, the sorting equipment might mistake the can as a “flat” item, and it could get grouped with other flat items such as paper or cardboard. Flattened aluminum cans are even thin enough to sometimes fall through the sorting equipment and end up getting missorted as garbage.



To find out how to properly prepare your recyclables for collection and what materials are accepted in the Gainesville curbside program, visit [CityofGainesville.org/recycle](https://www.cityofgainesville.org/recycle) or call 352-334-2330.

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