

Frequently Asked Questions

Recyclability Guidelines

1. Why publish Packaging Recyclability Guidelines (PRGs)?

Éco Entreprises Québec wanted to address your concerns about recyclability as producers. The [PRGs](#) are intended to provide an accessible and useful reference guide for you to assess the recyclability of your packaging to help you make better choices.

This guide will also help you better understand the collection, sorting, processing and recycling processes, as well as the problems that your packaging can pose at each of these stages.

2. What are the PRGs used for?

In addition to supporting you in the packaging selection and design process, the objectives of the PRGs are to:

- Ensure that the packaging materials you market are compatible with the recycling channels that are being developed;
- Increase the quality and value of recovered materials;
- Promote the achievement of the recovery and recycling targets set out in the *Regulation respecting a system of selective collection for certain residual materials*, CQLR c Q-2, r 46.01 (SC Regulation).

3. How were the PRGs developed?

The PRGs were developed following an analysis of a multitude of international guides on the recyclability of packaging. Éco Entreprises Québec was accompanied by [Lichens](#), a firm of external consultant specializing in recyclability, with the support of the [Association of Plastic Recyclers](#) (APR) in the drafting of the PRGs.

Various experts, such as research centres, sorting centres, packers and recyclers, were also consulted to ensure that the content was adapted to the Quebec and Canadian context.

4. What is the recyclability of packaging based on?

The proposed definition of recyclability is based on four characteristics: **ecodesigned** packaging, **collected** in the recovery bin, **sorted** at a sorting centre and **recycled** through an established market.

1. The way the packaging will be designed is the first factor to consider to increase its potential for recyclability at the end of its life. Reduction, procurement and recyclability are the three ecodesign strategies to consider.
2. Packaging must then be collected in the recovery bin in order to be diverted from waste. This task is facilitated by information, awareness-raising and education campaigns, sorting instructions on packaging and by residents adopting best sorting practices.
3. In sorting centres, packaging must be able to be sorted using different technologies in order to produce bales of recovered materials that meet the needs and standards of the industry.
4. Finally, the recycling of baled materials will depend on processors and recyclers who use state-of-the-art technologies that meet the standards of established markets. In addition, the availability and quality of materials, as well as the demand for recycled content and the price, will guarantee the recycling of the materials.

5. Why is it important to understand sorting, packaging and recycling processes?

Having a general understanding of curbside recycling allows you to make more informed choices and prevent potential issues that could be caused by your packaging.

The PRGs illustrate in a simplified and comprehensive way the curbside recycling process and the journey of packaging during the sorting, processing and recycling stages.

The guide also outlines the challenges posed by various packaging characteristics in terms of the actual impact at the different stages of the process.

With Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), producers are at the heart of the curbside recycling system and have full responsibility for the packaging they place on the market, from design to recycling.

6. Why are recyclability statements classified according to three levels:

- **preferable, detrimental and non-recyclable ?**

By providing specific guidance for many packaging materials, the PRGs aim to increase the recyclability potential and improve the quality of materials recovered in the curbside recycling system.

Packaging characteristics and material combinations are evaluated to determine their level of impact on curbside recycling.

The PRGs are divided into packaging material types and include design statements that qualify as **preferable** when they do not raise any issues during sorting, processing and recycling, **detrimental** if they complicate recyclability or render the packaging **non-recyclable**.

7. How often will the PRGs be updated?

With curbside recycling being modernized in Quebec, recycling infrastructure will be developed and new recycling channels will be established.

The PRGs will be updated in line with this evolution and with knowledge about packaging materials. Therefore, a precise frequency has not been determined.

8. Why don't the PRGs cover all packaging materials?

At the moment, the guidelines cover packaging of rigid PET, HDPE and PP, flexible PE, paper/cardboard, aluminium, ferrous metals and glass.

These materials were chosen because they make up the vast majority of packaging on the market and also because international guides on recyclability provide a collection of knowledge on the topic.

Some materials, such as PVC, PVDC and PLA (and other degradable plastics), will not be added because their use is discouraged and they are subject to a penalty.

On the other hand, other materials, such as flexible PP, as well as types of packaging such as laminated fibre materials and printed matter, are likely to be added in the future.

For more information, see the [Malus Guide](#).

9. Can my packaging say that it meets the PRGs?

The Recyclability Guidelines are a non-prescriptive guide designed to help you improve the performance of your packaging in the current curbside recycling system.

However, the PRGs cannot be used for marketing or certification purposes, or to declare that a package complies with them.

10. How do Éco Entreprises Québec's packaging recyclability guidelines compare with the Canadian Plastic Pact's Golden Design Rules for Plastics Packaging and the Association of Plastic Recyclers' APR Design® Guide for Plastics Recycling?

Developed by the Consumer Goods Forum, the Golden Design Rules for Plastics Packaging have been adapted for Canada by the Canadian Plastic Pact (CPP). The *Golden Rules* include nine general statements with the objective of reducing the amount of plastic packaging and making it easier to recycle.

The Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) is a North American organization that aims to improve plastic recycling.

The [APR Design® Guide for Plastics Recycling](#) provides a framework for packaging design and comprehensive testing protocols to measure every aspect of a package's design against industry-recognized criteria. This more technical approach is aimed at engineers and other packaging specialists.

Éco Entreprises Québec's Ecodesign and Packaging Recyclability Guidelines are aligned with the Golden Design Rules and are based on the APR Design® Guide. They are intended to increase the adoption of ecodesign, maximize recyclability and meet provincial packaging recovery and recycling targets.

As the first producer responsibility organization (EPR) in North America to publish guidelines, Éco Entreprises Québec has capitalized on its expertise and field experience to create non-prescriptive and comprehensive reference guides.

In addition to plastic, the guidelines also include other packaging materials: paper and cardboard, metals and glass.

11. Beyond recyclability, how can I improve the environmental performance of my packaging?

Our [Packaging Ecodesign Guidelines](#) can help you take into account environmental, social and economic criteria in a comprehensive approach, while maintaining the roles and functions of packaging.

To demystify ecodesign, understand its importance and understand how to incorporate it into your practices, you can consult the ecodesign guidelines. In addition to recyclability, this guide offers two additional strategies, namely reduction and procurement, as well as many examples of possible actions.