



Bottle and Can Recycling in California: How to Get Your Deposits Back

What's the Best Way to Recycle My Empty Beverage Containers?

California is one of only 10 U.S. states with a beverage container deposit return system that allows you to return empty bottles and cans to a recycling location and get back the nickel or dime deposits you paid when you purchased them.

California's container redemption rate (as of 2022) is 61%. Overall, in the U.S., the recycling rate for beverage containers with deposits is 64%, for containers without deposits 26%, and for all containers combined 35%. Deposit return systems provide many important benefits:

- Creating an incentive to recycle by providing income to consumers through returned deposits.
- Producing higher recycling rates and collecting higher-quality materials compared to curbside (blue bin) programs.
- Keeping communities cleaner by reducing litter.
- Lowering the amount of waste sent to landfills.
- Reducing the amount of plastic that enters our oceans and harms marine and human life.
- Decreasing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions by lessening reliance on raw materials to manufacture new containers.
- Creating recycling industry jobs.

But My Neighborhood Beverage Container Redemption Center Closed. What Should I Do?

1. First check to see if there are other nearby redemption centers. Go to www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/WhereToRecycle/ and use the search function to look for other centers in your area.
2. If you can't find a center in a convenient location, go to www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/BevContainer/InStoreRedemption to search for retailers that redeem in-store. Approximately 4,900 grocery stores, convenience stores and other retailers statewide have pledged to accept empty beverage containers and provide deposit refunds.

Note: If a store on this list will not take back your empty containers, email CalRecycle (California's Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery) at complaints@calrecycle.ca.gov or call 1-800-RECYCLE.

I Still Can't Find a Place to Return My Bottles and Cans. Should I Put Them in My Blue Bin?

Yes. Although container deposit return programs offer significant benefits compared to curbside systems, the two types of programs can work together well to maximize bottle and can recovery rates. However, containers put into blue bins can get contaminated, making them non-recyclable and perhaps resulting in them being shipped to landfills. Rinse out bottles and cans before putting them in your curbside bin, and make sure not to add any materials including food or other items (such as partly filled containers or pizza boxes with scraps on the cardboard).

Where Does My Money Go if I Don't Return My Containers for Recycling?

If you put your containers in a curbside blue bin, the deposits are returned to the curbside program that recycles your containers. If you put your containers in the trash, the containers go to the landfill and the deposit money you paid at the store stays in the state fund that is managed by CalRecycle.

Where Can I Learn More About Beverage Container Recycling in California?

Visit the website (www.container-recycling.org) of the Container Recycling Institute (CRI), a nonprofit organization that is a leading authority on the economic and environmental impacts of used beverage containers and other consumer product packaging. CRI's mission is to make North America a global model for the collection and quality recycling of packaging materials. Under the CRI website's "Issues" menu item, there is a page dedicated to California's deposit return system.