

Some things just don't go together

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There are **things in life that need to be kept separate**. While the best things in life go together like apple pie and cream, there are many things like **pilchards and jelly** or **vinegar and pap** that don't. Other things that **don't go together: recyclables and non-recyclables**. It's important to keep them **separated**.



Recycling has become part of many **households' daily routines**, and while it's not rocket science, there are some basic **procedures and rules that need to be followed** in order to **keep the recycling industry alive and well**. This is important not only because recycling has substantial **benefits to the environment**, but also because it is an industry that **creates and supports many jobs** (both formal and informal) and it **stimulates the circular economy** (recyclables are made into new products alleviating demand on natural resources). Vital **economic benefits** to our country.

A growing concern for **recycling companies like [Mpact Recycling](#)**, is the finding of waste with **contaminants such as rocks, sand and water**. This creates problems including damaging recycling equipment; rotting of paper and in turn the pathogens can cause damage to the health of the people working with the waste.

Why is this an issue?

When it comes to **paper and cardboard**, these need to be **dry to ensure they get recycled**. If these recyclable materials are **wet from being intentionally soaked in muddy water**, not only will it impact on the quality of the paper produced but it can also lead to inefficiencies with the transportation of wet waste which becomes a dead weight. Or if **rocks are concealed in cardboard** bales they have the ability to damage the equipment in the form of the paper machines at our mills.

With regards to **plastics** – these need to be kept **empty and clean to be recycled**. If they are filled with **sand, stones, liquids or any other** - it can cause serious damage to machinery. The full load then also has to be taken off the belt and sorted. Once again proving it's important to put clean, empty recyclables into the recycling stream.

With [Mpact Recycling](#) being the **leading paper and plastic recycler in South Africa**, these issues not only have a **negative impact** on the business, but **affect peoples' livelihoods** and the **recycling industry** as a whole.

How do we plan to solve this?

In recognition of **National Recycling Day on 17 September**, [Mpact Recycling](#) has launched a very memorable campaign: **"Some things just don't go together"**, which creates awareness around materials which must be **separated**

from recyclables. There are **6 different videos** that feature **two rising South African comedians** who get to **taste things that just don't mix.** The campaign is intended to leave a bad taste in your mouth and **remind you to keep recyclables separate, empty and clean to ensure they get recycled.**

We believe that consistent information and communication will succeed in **raising awareness of the value of recycling** and encourage **consumers and businesses** to actively **participate in the collection and sorting of used packaging for recycling.** It truly is a case of **quality over quantity.**

The **recyclables and contaminants which we feature in our campaign** are most commonly received at our branches. These **include:**

- o White paper and water
- o Cardboard and muddy water
- o Bales of cardboard with heavy objects in the bales
- o PET bottles filled with cool drink
- o HDPE bottles filled with sand and soil
- o Recyclables mixed with biodegradable packaging

Biodegradable packaging cannot be mixed with recyclables.

Many people believe **biodegradable packaging** is a good choice. This is a myth we must dispel. Here's why:

First, let's talk plastics:

PETCO states in its [Design for Recyclability Guide](#) that **biodegradable plastic packaging cannot be recycled**, so when it is mixed with recyclables it **impedes the recycling process**. Not all biodegradable plastics break down at the same rate which makes logistics around this waste stream complex. Currently, there's very **limited separation, collection, and processing infrastructure to support the responsible post-consumer management** of packaging made from **biodegradable and compostable materials**.

Now, let's talk paper:

Most fibre-based products are biodegradable because they eventually break down. So, in the case of paper and cardboard packaging, it is **both recyclable and biodegradable**. So why would we **encourage you to rather recycle?**

The **waste hierarchy** is a system of 5 rungs, you've most likely heard of the first 3: "**reduce, reuse, recycle**". These are followed by **recovery (biodegrading and composting)** and **disposal (sending waste to landfill)**. You **start at the top** and if you **can't fulfil** that rung, you **default to the next**. So, with **paper packaging**, **first** you would **reduce**, **if not**, you would **reuse** (however, it's important not to add contaminants in this stage because it can continually be reused or recycled). If reducing and reusing are not options, **default to recycling**. **Recycling sits above biodegradability and compostability** in the waste hierarchy. Why? **Recycling drives the circular economy**.

Ultimately, we hope our **2022 Clean-Up & Recycle Week campaign** takes some of the nitty gritty information included in this **blog**, and makes it **simpler to understand** and **remember**, so the everyday consumer can **separate their recyclables**, keep them **empty** and **clean to ensure they get recycled**. This will mean **cleaner, greener cities**, more **income opportunities**, and ensuring the **circular economy** stays in motion for a **healthier planet**.

- " **Consumers can play a role in sustainable environmental practices** 14 May 2024
- " **The value of plastic waste** 24 Apr 2024
- " **The relationship between packaging and food waste** 26 Mar 2024
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- " **Smart sustainable packaging solutions demonstrated** 24 Nov 2023

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Mpact is the largest paper and plastics packaging and recycling business in Southern Africa. Our integrated business model is uniquely focused on closing the loop in plastic and paper packaging through recycling and beneficiation of recyclables.

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