

# CREATING SIGNAGE FOR ZERO WASTE EVENTS

Clear and simple signage for rubbish, recycling and food scraps can help minimise the rubbish generated by an event and reduce contamination.

New Zealand has nationally agreed colours for different waste types to help reduce confusion for the public. Typically the body of a bin is a dark colour and the lid is coloured. The agreed colours are shown here.



If your bins and lids are all black, or the incorrect colour, then signage is key.

When it comes to event signage you have four main options to help people identify which items should go in which bins:

1. Words
2. Words and symbols
3. Photos
4. Actual objects

## WORDS

Label the bins with the name of the waste stream and choose words that the public understands.

- The recommended wording is:
  - Rubbish
  - Recycling
  - Food scraps
  - Food scraps and compostable packaging
  - Glass

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Note: 80–90% of event recycling is bottles and cans so it is helpful to remind the public that they can be recycled.

- Both the body of the bin and the bin lid should be labelled.
- You may also want to have a sign above the bin.
- Make sure that at least one sign is at child height if it is a family orientated event.
- All words should be horizontal, not vertical, to make them easy to read.
- If your event is outdoors it may be worthwhile laminating the sign, so that it doesn't disintegrate if it rains.
- For some events, bilingual signage might be useful.

## TOP TIP

Use your bin lid by placing a sign on the inside and outside of the lid. In fine weather the open bin lid acts as additional signage and in wet weather the closed lid does the same.



Gourmet Night Market Tauranga - signs on flipped lids, clipboards and flags



Para Kore Recycling on Marae Program - New Zealand recycling symbols - stickers on side and lid of bins

## WORDS & SYMBOLS

If your event includes people who speak English as a second language or it has a large number of children attending, it is useful to include symbols and words. The symbols show visually what kinds of items should go in each bin.

- The New Zealand Recycling Symbols are free to download and use and can be printed horizontally or vertically. They include symbols for all the main types of waste streams. Download them here [bit.ly/RecyclingSymbols](http://bit.ly/RecyclingSymbols)
- It is also possible to create your own symbols but they should be easily recognisable and use the correct colours, listed previously.

## TOP TIP

Make sure your bins are placed next to each other in the same order around your site. A suggested order is rubbish, compost, recycling.

## PHOTOS

If your event is held regularly or if only specific types of rubbish are likely to be generated by the event, it may be useful to use photos instead of symbols.

- Using photos minimises any ambiguity as to what should be recycled in each bin and any language barriers, however, if you change suppliers or change products your signage may then need replacing.
- It may be difficult to take photos that represent all items in the waste stream.
- Signage with photos can look much busier, so consider carefully how many items you are depicting on signs.

## TOP TIP

Flags are also a good idea. They help people easily see where the recycling station is. Use a symbol which relates to zero waste, recycling or compost.

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Dunedin Farmers Market - signs clipped with brackets



Splore Music Festival - flag marks the recycling station

## ACTUAL OBJECTS

Some events choose to fix actual examples of what can be recycled (e.g. cups) to a board above a bin or to the bin cover.

- This can be useful when only specific types of items can be recycled e.g. if only one brand of coffee cup can be composted etc.
- This type of signage works well if it is intended to be used at a number of different events where different items will be recycled.
- It also works best at events which have staff at every recycling station, as the items can easily be knocked off the signs.

If choosing to use actual objects, create a plan in advance so you know how many items you want to attach and which ones. Consider:

- What will you use to attach the items? Duct tape or cable ties are effective but create waste at the end of the event. Crocodile clips work well and can be reused. Velcro can be problematic if items go missing mid event and tape can be problematic if it rains or if your location is windy.

- Can your volunteers or waste staff empty the bins without knocking off the attached items? If you are using bin covers, attach the items to the bin cover, so when the bin needs to be emptied all you need to do is lift up the cover.
- How will you source the items you want to attach? You could organise a stallholders meeting at the start of the event and ask them to hand you examples of their packaging, so waste staff can attach the items to the signs.

## TOP TIP

Have a plan in place if the objects go missing or fall off. Will people still know what to put in each bin? If you are using actual objects you should also include words and/or symbols somewhere on the signage in case the objects are knocked off mid event.



Hastings Farmers Market - actual items from vendors attached with clips

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## WHAT CAN YOU AFFIX SIGNAGE TO?

1. Bin bodies
2. Bin lids



Bin lids from Clean Events Ltd

3. Fabric bin covers - these need to be purchased separately or can sometimes be hired from your local council or waste company.



World Masters Games in Auckland - fabric bin covers from ECP

4. Portable bin lids/hoods - these need to be purchased separately or can sometimes be hired from your local council or waste company.



Loanable events kit from Dunedin City Council includes bin hoods and flag

5. Bin surrounds - these are free standing boards that wrap around any existing bins. They are useful if the existing bins don't follow the standardised colours.



Loanable events kits from Auckland Council - bin surrounds

6. Backing boards - these need to be rigid so they can stand up to windy conditions and to minimise them being knocked over. They can be free standing as shown below. Alternatively clipframes which clip onto the bins can be a good idea, so if changes are needed posters can be easily replaced and updated.



Loanable event kit from Whakatane District Council - freestanding backing boards

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Newton Festival: signs attached to fence; removable bin lids.  
Image credit Joany Grima



Auckland Council bin covers

## WHAT CAN YOU MAKE SIGNAGE OUT OF?

Signs can be made from stickers, laminated paper, corflute, plastic or metal.

Important considerations when making signage include:

- Make sure your signage is waterproof
- Make sure your sign is large enough to be read at a distance. In most cases a minimum of A4 is advised.
- Make sure your sign is easy to read. Don't use italics or capital letters.
- Limit the use of logos or sponsors information on signage as then the signage can be reused at other events
- Design your sign so that it can be recycled or reused at the end of the event

### TOP TIP

If there are existing public place rubbish bins at the event remove them, cover them up or relabel them so that they do not work against your recycling goals. If covered up place signs on top directing the public to the recycling stations

For any questions on how to use these colours or the appropriate signage to use please contact WasteMINZ on 09 476 7162.

**Thank you for joining us in making it easier for New Zealanders to recycle at events.**