Which plastic is it?

Information sheet for recyclers of empty Pesticide Containers

CropLife SOUTH AFRICA

Every pesticide container carries a code moulded into the plastic. Only the **number inside the recycling triangle** and the **letters below it** tell you the plastic type. Look on the bottom of the pesticide container, or near the handle or base edge. The code is pressed into the plastic itself, not printed on the label.

DIRECTIVE FOR ALL RECYCLERS

MAIN STREAM
Code 2 only (HDPE and HDPE-F)

GRIND SEPARATELY
Code 5 (PP)

REMOVE FOR DESTRUCTION
Code 1 (PET) and code 7 (COEX): keep apart

Anything else, such as code 4 (LDPE), stays out of the main stream.

1 Read the right mark: real examples

✓ Plastic type: read this ✗ Not the plastic type: ignore



HDPE (2) with F

1. **2 HDPE**: high-density polyethylene.
2. **F**: fluorinated. The inside wall is treated to resist solvents.
3. **Clock**: month and year it was made.



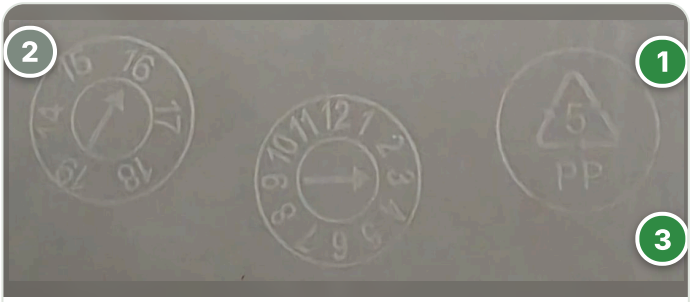
PET (1)

1. **1 PET** inside the triangle.
2. **Loose "2"** outside the triangle: a mould number, not the plastic.



COEX: PE-HD / PE-PA

1. **Two materials named** = multi-layer: HDPE with a Nylon (PA) barrier layer.
2. Looks like HDPE, but **remove it and keep apart for destruction**.



PP (5)

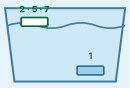
1. **5 PP**: polypropylene.
2. **Two clocks**: year and month of production.
3. Keep apart, although recyclable.

2 The plastics you will see, and which are valuable

CODE	PLASTIC	WHERE YOU FIND IT	HOW TO RECOGNISE IT	SORT	
2	**HDPE** High-density polyethylene	Most cans and bottles, 1 L – 25 L	Opaque, white or coloured. Waxy feel. Bends without cracking. Floats.	**Main stream.**	✓
2 + F	**HDPE-F** Fluorinated HDPE	Cans for solvent-based products	Looks like HDPE. An “F” is moulded near the code.	**Main stream.**	✓
4	**LDPE** Low-density polyethylene	Bags, liners, film	Soft and flexible; easy to squeeze or fold. Feels waxy. Floats.	**Not in the main stream; keep apart.**	✓
5	**PP** Polypropylene	Caps, buckets and tubs	Harder and stiffer than HDPE. Floats.	**Grind separately, keep apart.**	✓
7 / O	**COEX** Multi-layer (HDPE + Nylon or EVOH)	Solvent-based products (e.g. EC)	Looks like HDPE. Marked COEX, PE-HD/PE-PA or HDPE/EVOH. Cut edge shows layers, sometimes a coloured middle layer. Floats.	**Remove and keep apart for destruction.**	✗
1	**PET** Polyethylene terephthalate	Smaller bottles, 100 ml – 1 L	Glossy and stiff, often clear. Crackles when squeezed; leaves white creases. **Sinks.**	**Remove and keep apart for destruction.**	✗

Marks that do not reveal the correct kind of plastic

- ✗ Date clocks (circles with numbers and an arrow)
- ✗ Loose numbers outside the triangle (mould or cavity numbers)
- ✗ Manufacturer logos and symbols
- ✗ Batch numbers, handwriting or stickers
- ✗ UN transport codes (e.g. “UN 3H1/...”)



Not sure? Float test

Drop a clean piece into a bucket of water. **PET (1) sinks.** HDPE, PP and COEX float, so for those you must read the code.

✓ Accept

- ✓ Triple-rinsed or pressure-rinsed
- ✓ Dry inside, no smell or residue
- ✓ Punctured so it can’t be reused
- ✓ Cap off and foil seal removed

✗ Reject or set aside

- ✗ Product, foam or crystals still inside
- ✗ Strong chemical smell
- ✗ No code, or you are not sure
- ✗ Mixed with other waste



Rinsed, cap off, ready to sort

⚠ Safety

- ⚠ Wear gloves, eye, mouth and nose protection.
- ⚠ Never burn plastic to test it. The smoke is toxic.
- ⚠ Never reuse containers for food, water or animal feed.