HAMBOORG.CITY

Free platform for foreigners in Germany

✓ 24/7 Assistant in Your Language
✓ Official Document Scanner
✓ Deadline Reminders
✓ Benefit Calculators

hamboorg.city — is and will be FREE

Waste Disposal and Recycling — Mülltrennung in Germany

How waste separation works in Germany: which waste goes in which bin, the deposit system, and bulk waste disposal.

Deutsche Begriffe: Mülltrennung | Recycling | Gelber Sack | Biotonne | Restmüll | Sperrmüll | Pfand

---

Why Mülltrennung?

Germany is the **world champion in recycling** — and that's thanks to strict Mülltrennung. As a resident, you are **obligated** to separate your waste properly. Mülltrennung conserves resources, reduces CO_2 emissions, and saves disposal costs.

In your apartment or house, there are several **waste bins** ready to use. Which bins you have and how often they are emptied depends on your **city and landlord**.

Waste Bins Overview

Blue Bin — Paper and Cardboard

- Newspapers, magazines, catalogs
- Cardboard boxes and packaging
- Books (without plastic covers)
- Envelopes (even with windows)
- Writing paper, school notebooks

DO NOT PUT IN: coated paper, wallpaper, soiled paper (e.g., greasy pizza boxes), photos

□ Yellow Bin / Yellow Sack — Packaging

• Plastic packaging (yogurt cups, films, bags)

• Drink cartons (Tetra Pak)

• Cans and tinned goods

• Aluminum foil and aluminum containers

• Styrofoam packaging

• Toothpaste tubes

DO NOT PUT IN: toys, CDs, coat hangers, flower pots (only packaging with the **Green Dot** or similar symbol)

□/□ Biotonne — Organic Waste

• Fruit and vegetable scraps

• Coffee grounds and tea bags

• Eggshells

• Garden waste (leaves, grass, flowers)

• Bread scraps

• Paper towels (unprinted)

DO NOT PUT IN: bones, meat (in many cities), cat litter, compostable plastic bags (not allowed in many cities)

● Restmülltonne — Everything Else

• Cigarette butts

• Diapers and hygiene products

• Vacuum cleaner bags

• Broken porcelain and ceramics

• Photos

• Soiled paper

• Small amounts of ash (cold!)

□ Glass Container — Recycled Glass

Glass is separated by **color** into containers:

• **White/clear** — clear bottles and glasses

• **Green** — green bottles and glasses

• **Brown** — brown bottles and glasses

• **Blue or red glass** → into the green glass container

DO NOT PUT IN: drinking glasses, window glass, mirrors, ceramics, porcelain, light bulbs

Important: Glass containers have **deposit hours** (usually Mon–Sat, 7–8 PM). On Sundays and at night, you cannot deposit glass!

The Deposit System (Pfand)

Germany has a **deposit system** for beverage containers:

Packaging	Deposit
Single-use bottles (plastic, with deposit symbol)	**€0.25**
Single-use cans	**€0.25**
Reusable bottles (glass, beer)	**€0.08**
Reusable bottles (glass, water/lemonade)	**€0.15**
Reusable bottles (PET)	**€0.15**

How Does It Work?

1. You buy a beverage and pay the **deposit** at the register

2. You take the empty bottle/can to the **deposit machine** in the supermarket

3. You receive a **receipt** that is credited at the register

Tip: You can recognize the deposit symbol on the bottle. Not all bottles have deposits — e.g., wine, juice in glass bottles, and spirits are often **deposit-free**.

Bulk Waste (Sperrmüll)

For large items that don't fit in bins, there is **Sperrmüll**:

• Furniture (cabinets, sofas, beds, tables)

• Mattresses

• Carpets

• Large household appliances (washing machine, refrigerator) — often **separate pickup**!

How Does Bulk Waste Pickup Work?

1. Schedule a pickup — online, by phone, or via form with your waste management company

2. Prepare bulk waste — on the agreed date in front of your house (at the curb)

3. Pickup — the waste management company collects the items

Costs: In many cities, bulk waste pickup is **free 1–2× per year**. After that or for larger quantities: **€20–100** per pickup.

Alternatives

• **Recycling center / Wertstoffhof** — You bring items yourself (often free)

• **eBay Kleinanzeigen** — give away or sell usable furniture

• **Social thrift store** — donates well-maintained furniture to those in need

Electronic Waste (E-Waste)

Electronic devices must **NOT** go in household trash:

• Smartphones, tablets, laptops

• Cables, chargers

• Toaster, blender, hair dryer

• Energy-saving bulbs, LED lamps

• Batteries and accumulators

Where to Take Them?

• **Recycling center** — free disposal

• **Electronics stores** — stores with 400+ m² of floor space must accept small old devices (under 25 cm) for free

• **Supermarkets** — since 2022, also accept small electronic devices (from 800+ m² sales area)

• **Batteries** — collection boxes in every supermarket and drugstore

Common Mistakes

1. Pizza boxes in the blue bin — No! Greasy paper goes in Restmülltonne

2. Diapers in Biotonne — No! Restmülltonne

3. Deposit bottles in glass container — You're losing money! Take them to the machine

4. Electronic devices in household trash — Forbidden! Take them to recycling center or store

5. Leaving trash next to the bin — Possible fine (€10–€5,000, depending on city)

Waste Disposal Costs

As a tenant, you pay waste fees through **utility costs**. They depend on:

• **Bin size** (120 l, 240 l, 1,100 l)

• **Emptying frequency** (weekly, every two weeks)

• **City/municipality**

Typical costs: **€150–400/year** per household (included in utility costs).

Daily Tips

• **Small trash cans** in the kitchen — one for Restmülltonne, one for packaging, one for bio

• **Paper bag** for Biotonne — prevents odor and moisture

• **Collect deposit bottles** — it's worthwhile, especially at €0.25 per bottle

• **Use an app** — many cities have a waste disposal app with emptying dates and waste guides