



THE TRAY DEBATE

A complicated issue simplified by The Build-a-Tray™ Program


Recyclable? Compostable? Biodegradable? Environmentally Safe?

Foam Trays - Some say this is the “easiest” solution.

Cardboard Tray - Some say this is the “Green” solution.

Washable Tray - Some say this is the “only” solution.

**Which tray works best for your school lunch program? How do you separate the truth from spin?
Here are the facts about the three types of trays used in Food Service.**

TRAY ISSUE	FOAM TRAY	CARDBOARD TRAY	HARD WASHABLE TRAY
COST	Approx. .032 cents per tray-disposable	Approx. .072 cents per tray-disposable	Approx. \$12 per tray Re-usable
MANAGEMENT EXPENSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Custodial Labor to remove used trays ✓ Need Storage space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Outside facility expenses to recycle or compost paper trays. ✓ Custodial labor to remove, clean, gather and correctly package used trays to compost. (Cannot be put in typical garbage bags.) ✓ Need storage space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Dishwasher equipment is expensive ✓ Costs for maintenance on equipment ✓ Detergents needed ✓ Excessive water usage ✓ Staff labor to maintain
SANITATION	GOOD – Prevents food borne illness	GOOD – Prevents food borne illness	NOT GOOD – Higher microbiological levels found than on a disposable tray
RECYCLABILITY	YES Styrofoam recycling facilities are up and coming in the US	YES Trays must be cleaned and sorted from other daily trash Must be disposed in a recyclable bag to a recycling facility.	Not Applicable
“GREEN” ABILITY (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT)	Recycling facilities are up and coming in the US. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Must use a compost facility ✓ BIODEGRADABLE - Only if properly disposed of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Excessive water usage ✓ Detergent Waste ✓ Electricity

What do Recyclable, Biodegradable and Compostable really mean?

The American Chemistry Council recently conducted a survey on the definition of these terms:

Recycling is simply the reprocessing of old or used materials into new products. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), recycling is one of the best ways to reduce landfill waste.

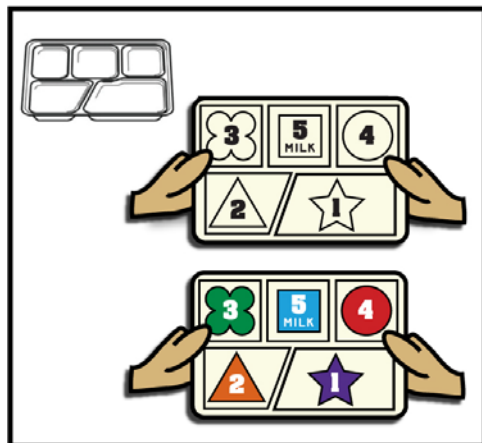
Biodegradable applies to a product that is able to break down naturally in one year or less, and leaves nothing behind. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has a similar definition for biodegradable.

Compostable items can be put back into the ground to make soil, mulch, or fertilizer that can be used in a garden or around the home. The chief attribute of compostable materials is that the decomposition is beneficial to the earth.

Know the facts: What is often not understood about these terms is how the typical landfill works. Most of the trash that is disposed at landfills is packaged in plastic bags, and landfills themselves are designed to keep out sunlight and moisture so the contents degrade very slowly -- if at all. Whether or not the material is recyclable, biodegradable or compostable is often irrelevant.

Take note – simply because a product is made from organic sources, it does not mean it will biodegrade or compost properly. Most compostable items must be sent to a professionally managed composting facility.

It's your decision! Until there are tighter rules regarding the marketing claims for compostable and biodegradable materials, individual consumers must do their own homework about which products to use. According to the American Chemistry Council, many communities throughout the country are expanding their recycling programs to include more types of plastic. Check with your community's municipal waste management program for a complete listing of the materials accepted for recycling.



The Build-a-Tray™ Program



The Build-a-Tray™ Program is an "Eat Right" plan that teaches students proper nutrition. Shape-coded trays make it easy for students to choose nutritionally sound lunches that meet Offer vs. Serve (OVS) compliance.

Colors and shapes point the way to different food groups that are displayed on the food service line. Students match and fill their trays with at least three food items that make a nutritionally complete meal.

The Build-a-Tray™ Program can be implemented using Polystyrene (code #6) foodservice trays. According to the EPA, Polystyrene single-use foodservice items comprise only 1.2 percent of landfill waste. The program can also be customized for washable, re-usable school lunch trays.

To learn how **The Build-a-Tray™ Program** can affordably – and even profitably – be implemented for your school, contact nationally recognized food court designer Tacey Martinek at The Artworks Shop, tel. 888-939-1399 or visit: www.theartworkshop.com

