



All the rubbish starts in the same place. It takes lots of machines and people to sort it out.

Start here
First, the rubbish drops slowly onto a conveyor belt.

Bag splitters tear up the rubbish.

Sharp claws rip open plastic bags and bin liners.
The small pieces of rubbish continue their journey here.

Inside this cabin, people pick out anything dangerous.

Waste to be burned
Hazardous waste

The rubbish moves across a series of giant screws to filter out cardboard.

Each screw rotates

Cardboard ends up here

The rubbish from the top conveyor belt falls onto a set of rollers.

MRF control room

These people pick out paper here and drop it down a chute.

This scanner detects plastic things and filters them out.

PET plastic

HDPE plastic

All other plastic

Mixed paper

High quality white paper

Anything left on the conveyor passes underneath a giant magnet, which picks out steel cans.

The cans drop off the magnet here.

Steel and Tin

All the bins take it in turns to empty out into a giant machine called a baler.

This conveyor belt moves really fast. Most of the rubbish sticks to it, but aluminium cans are so light that they fly off into a bin.

Aluminium

The baler squashes the rubbish into bales, and ties them up with steel rope.

Steel rope

Each bale contains just one kind of material.

Aluminium bales

A forklift truck moves bales into stacks ready for collection.

Any rubbish left on this belt will end up being burned.

A magnet picks out scraps of iron and steel, and drops them into a bin.

Scrap iron and steel

The rubbish falls onto a kind of sieve, which stretches out to let really tiny bits fall through. Bigger bits get pushed forward onto a spinning drum.

As the drum spins, bits of broken glass fly out through holes around the sides.

Spinning drum

Glass bits

Lighter bits of rubbish fall onto another belt.

Glass

This belt carries mostly paper.

This belt carries mostly empty containers.

People in this cabin pick out high quality white paper.

Paper

These big bins store the materials while they wait to be packed in bales.

These belts all lead to the baler