

Type of Material	Use It?	Carbon/Nitrogen	Details
Algae, Seaweed	Yes	Nitrogen	Good nutrient source
Ashes from coal or charcoal	No	N/A	May contain materials bad for plants
Ashes from untreated, unpainted wood	Careful	Neutral	Fine amounts at most. Can become too alkaline and suppress composting
Beverages, kitchen rinse water	Yes	Neutral	Good to moisten the middle of the pile. Don't over-moisten the pile.
Bird Droppings	Careful	Nitrogen	May contain weed seeds or disease organism
Cardboard	Yes	Carbon	Shred into small pieces. If you have a lot, consider recycling.
Cat droppings or cat litter	No	N/A	Avoid - may contain disease organisms
Citrus	Yes	Nitrogen	Add as much citrus as you want, but be certain to add an equal amount of carbon-bearing material at the same time.
Coffee grounds and filters, tea bags	Yes	Nitrogen	Worms love coffee grounds/filters
Corn stalks, corn cobs	Yes	Carbon	Best if shredded/chopped and mixed well with nitrogen rich materials
Dog droppings	No	N/A	Avoid
Dryer lint	Yes	Carbon	Compost away!
Egg shells	Yes	Carbon	Breaks down slowly, crushing helps
Fish scraps	No	N/A	Can attract rodents and cause a stinky pile
Fruit trimmings	Yes	Nitrogen	Use peels, cores and stems
Grass	Yes	Carbon/Nitrogen	Fresh cut green grass adds nitrogen, dry grass adds carbon
Hair	Yes	Nitrogen	Scatter so it isn't in clumps
Hay	Yes	Carbon/Nitrogen	Grass hay will probably contain a lot of seed, which can resprout in your garden. Alfalfa hay will compost very readily. Be sure hay is well-moistened prior to adding to pile. Green hay provides nitrogen.
Herbs - fresh and dried	Yes	Nitrogen	What aren't herbs good for?
Human feces	No	N/A	Avoid
Human urine	Careful		Some say yes, some say no-if you gotta go and your pile needs some moisture...
Manure (horse, cow, pig, sheep, goat, chicken, rabbit)	Yes	Nitrogen	Great source of nitrogen. Mix with carbon rich materials so it breaks down better
Meat, fat, grease, bones	No	N/A	Avoid

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Milk, cheese, yogurt	Careful	Neutral	Some say yes, some say no...if you do, put deep in pile to avoid attracting animals, use in moderation
Newspaper	Yes	Carbon	Shred so it breaks down easier. It is easy to add too much so recycle if you have a lot. Don't add slick color pages.
Oak leaves	Yes	Carbon	Shredding helps them to break down faster. Place leaves in an empty garbage bin and use an electric string trimmer to chop up. They decompose slowly - acidic
Paper - napkins, towels, post-its, kleenex, etc	Yes	Carbon	Shred/tear heavier papers into smaller pieces
Pine needles	Yes	Carbon	Don't overload pile. Decomposes slowly - acidic
Rice - cooked/uncooked	Careful	Carbon	Ensure that your cooked rice is plain - no butters, oils, meats, etc added
Sawdust and wood shavings-untreated	Yes	Carbon	High in carbon, don't use too much. Don't use treated woods.
Shrimp shells	Yes	Nitrogen	Slow to compost
Sod	Careful	Nitrogen	Make sure pile will be hot enough so grass doesn't continue to grow
Vacuum cleaner bag contents	Careful	Carbon	Fine with usual dirt, lint, hair, etc. Careful with inorganics like glass, plastics, etc.
Vegetables - cooked	Yes	Nitrogen	They must not be cooked in any butter/oils, so long as they are plain.
Vegetable trimmings	Yes	Nitrogen	The smaller the pieces, the faster to compost
*Weeds	Careful	Nitrogen	Avoid weeds that have gone to seed. If the weeds are green and the seeds not mature they are safe to add.

Making Compost

The speed with which you produce finished compost will be determined by how you collect materials, whether you chop them up, how you mix them together, and on and on. Achieving a good balance of carbon and nitrogen is easier if you pile it all at once. Layering is traditional, but mixing the materials works as well. Visit www.composting101.com for more detailed information.

Shredded organic materials heat up rapidly, decompose quickly, and produce a uniform compost. The decomposition rate increases with the size of the composting materials. If you want the pile to decay faster, chop up large fibrous materials."

*Morning glory/bindweed, sheep sorrel, ivy, several kinds of grasses, and some other plants can resprout from their roots and/or stems in the compost pile. Just when you thought you had them all chopped up, you'd actually helped them to multiply! Don't compost these weeds unless they are completely dead and dry (you may want to leave them in a sunny place for a couple of weeks before composting). Remember also that composting weeds that have gone to seed will create weeds in next year's garden, unless a very hot pile temperature can be maintained to kill the seeds.