

# Build an Indoor Compost Bin

## Get Ready & Build Your Bin

**Red Wiggler worms** used for indoor composting (aka vermicomposting) need air, moisture and shelter.

When you provide a good environment for your worms, your indoor bin can keep generating compost for years to come.

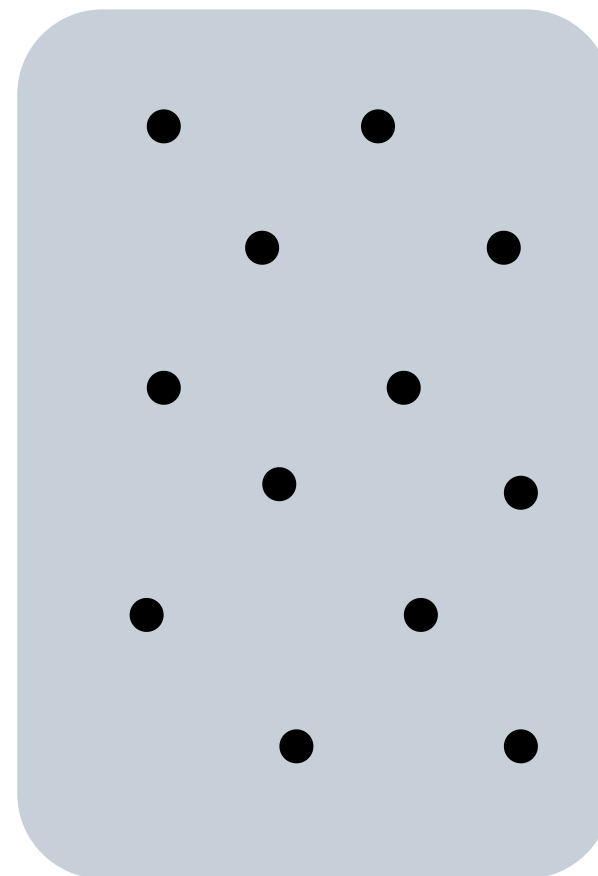
You'll need a **plastic bin with a lid**. It can be as small as a shoe box, or as large as a storage box, depending on how much space you have available and how much food scraps you want to process each week.

You'll need a **drill** or an awl to **make holes in the top**. If it's a deep bin you may want to also drill holes in the upper sides for greater airflow; the holes should be above the compost bedding area.

**How many worms do you need?** Red Wigglers can eat half their body weight EVERY DAY. So, a pound of worms will eat half a pound of food scraps every day. Thus, they can consume and transform into compost 3.5 pounds of food scraps every week.

You'll need a source of **Compost Greens**. These are fruit and vegetable scraps. You can learn more about Compost Greens on pages 17 and 18 of **The Compost Heroes**.

Lastly, you'll need a source of **Compost Browns**. For an indoor bin, this can be shredded newspaper. Learn more about Compost Browns on pages 19 and 20 of **The Compost Heroes**.



Drill a pattern of air holes in the top of your bin lid.

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## Prepare Your Bin

Once you've prepared your bin, **shred newspaper to create a bedding material** for the worms. The newspaper should be about 3-4 inches deep at the bottom of the bin.

Only use newspaper that is printed with **soy-based ink** (many are), so no toxic materials will leach into the environment. This is especially important if you plan on using the compost in a vegetable or fruit garden.

Add some **water** – enough to give the newspaper moisture, but not so much that it's sopping wet – the consistency of wrung sponge is about right.

Tuck some **fruit and vegetable scraps** UNDER THE BEDDING, at the bottom of the bin.

## Introducing Your Worms to the Bin

Purchase a pound (two pounds for a very large bin) of **Red Wiggler worms** at your local greenmarket, pet shop, or online.

Add the worms on **TOP OF THE BEDDING** in the bin. Let them find their own way down into the bedding. They will naturally want to burrow down in order to get away from the surface air and light.



This is a metal countertop bowl for food scrap collection, paired with a pot cover. The nice thing about lining the bowl with newspaper is that **EVERYTHING** - food and newspaper - can be composted.

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## Maintain Your Worm Bin

The worms will naturally maintain their population at an amount that is appropriate for the size of their environment.

After the initial dampening of the newspaper, you will rarely if ever need to add water again – the moisture will come from the food scraps you feed your worms.

Feed your worms two or three times a week. The bin can go for up to two weeks without adding scraps. Always tuck the food scraps under the bedding.

The smaller you cut up your food scraps, the quicker they will be consumed.

For an indoor bin, feed the worms **ONLY FRUIT AND VEGETABLE scraps** – **NO MEAT, BONES, FATS or DAIRY.**

You will need to periodically replenish the shredded newspaper bedding, as the worms will be consuming that as well.

Keep your bin out of direct sunlight, in a well ventilated, room temperature area.



This photo was from a time when I was doing **OUTDOOR COMPOSTING** in a large bin. For a smaller indoor bin, both the newspaper and the food scraps would be cut or shredded into smaller pieces.

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## Harvest Your Compost

When you see lots of clumps of what looks like rich, brown soil, then your compost is ready for harvest. If you are taking out only small amounts, then you can simply spoon out the amount needed.

If you want to harvest all or a major portion of the bin, then feed the worms on one side of the bin for a few weeks so that they all migrate to the side with the food. Scoop up the compost from the uninhabited side. Then repeat, moving the worms to the other side by feeding them where you want them to go so you can access the compost from the other side.

For extra insurance that you are not removing worms from the bin, use a loose sieve to sift through the compost and retrieve any worms.

## Use Your Compost

Mix compost with potting soil for indoor plants or outdoor planters or gardens. If you are adding compost to the top layer of soil of a plant, indoors or outdoors, add a small layer of regular soil on top of the compost because exposure to the sun and air will leech away some of the compost's nutrient richness.

Share with family, friends and neighbors!



Enjoy the fruits of your compost!