

First Time Scrapping Guide



A simple, safe, step-by-step handbook for beginners

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Safety + Starter Tools

Start safe and stay efficient from day one

Safety first

Wear: gloves, safety glasses, boots, and long sleeves. Use a dust mask when cutting, grinding, or handling insulation.

Avoid: sealed tanks or pressurized cylinders, unknown chemicals, oily sludge, and asbestos insulation.

Rule: If you cannot identify it safely, do not scrap it.

Starter tools

- Magnet, side cutters, pliers, screwdrivers, utility knife
- Adjustable wrench, small pry bar, flashlight
- Bins/totes, labels, straps/tarp

How scrapping pays

Scrap yards pay based on metal type, cleanliness, and weight. Sorting and keeping metal clean is the easiest way for beginners to increase payouts.

Beginner tip

Your first goal is to learn sorting and build a simple routine, not to strip everything or chase every last penny.

Keep it legal

Only take scrap you own or have permission to haul away. Bring photo ID to the yard and keep loads clearly separated.



Fast Identification + Wire Basics

Quick ways to sort the "money metals"



Fast identification

Use a magnet: if it sticks, it is ferrous (steel/iron) and usually lower value. If it does not stick, it is non-ferrous and usually higher value.

Common categories

- Steel/iron (magnetic): easy weight, lower pay
- Aluminum: light, non-magnetic
- Copper: wire and pipe, high pay
- Brass: faucets/valves, good pay
- Stainless: often weak magnetic, medium pay

Wire basics

- Separate thick wire vs mixed insulated wire
- Strip only thick wire when it is worth the time
- Do not burn insulation off wire
- Keep copper clean and dry

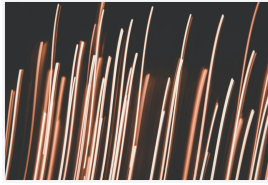
Pro move: sort as you load

Keep separate bins for steel, aluminum, copper, and brass in your vehicle. Mixing metals usually gets you paid less.



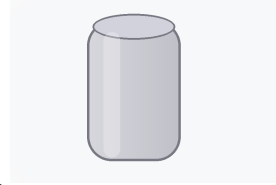
Common Metals: Visual ID

Photos and quick cues to help you sort faster



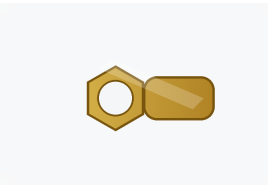
Copper

- Reddish-brown (often shiny)
- Wires, pipes, motors
- High value; keep clean/dry



Aluminum

- Lightweight, silver
- Cans, rims, gutters
- Non-magnetic



Brass

- Yellow-gold color
- Faucets, valves, fittings
- Heavier than aluminum



Steel / Iron

- Magnet sticks strong
- Appliances, frames, rebar
- Lower value but common



Stainless Steel

- Silvery, often shiny
- Sinks, cookware, fasteners
- May be weak magnetic

Fast check: use a magnet

Magnet sticks = ferrous (steel/iron). No stick = non-ferrous (usually higher value). If you are unsure, keep it separate and ask the yard to grade it.

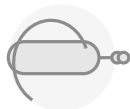
Tip: keep "unknown" metal separate

Separate piles get better pricing than mixed loads.



Household Scrap You Might Miss

Common items that can add up fast



Extension cords & chargers

Copper inside (sell as insulated wire)

Tip: Don't burn insulation. Coil and keep dry.



Old faucets & valves

Often brass (non-magnetic, yellow-gold)

Tip: Remove plastic handles if easy.



Small appliances

Mixed metals + wiring (toasters, vacuums)

Tip: Keep cords on; yards often buy as-is.



Ceiling fans & power tools

Electric motors (separate category at many yards)

Tip: Motors are heavy - worth saving.



Aluminum cans & clean foil

Aluminum (lightweight, non-magnetic)

Tip: Rinse when possible; keep separate from steel.



Stainless cookware

Stainless steel (may be weak-magnetic)

Tip: Pots, pans, sinks, trim pieces.



Old grills, chairs, gutters

Often aluminum or steel (magnet test)

Tip: Sort aluminum vs steel for better pricing.



Computers & small electronics

E-waste (some yards pay separately)

Tip: Ask your yard what they accept.

Quick rule: if it has a cord, a motor, or a metal fitting, it may be worth saving.

Sort what you can (copper/brass/aluminum/steel) and ask the yard how they want electronics separated.



Cash Payouts: What to Expect

Realistic examples of how scrap adds up (example prices only)

How payouts work

- You unload by category (steel, aluminum, copper, brass, wire, motors, etc.).
- Each category is weighed and graded (clean vs dirty, #1 vs #2 copper, etc.).
- The yard prints a scale ticket showing weights, rates, and your total payout.
- Most yards require photo ID; some items have extra rules (AC units, catalytic converters).
- Payment can be cash, check, or card depending on local rules and yard policy.

Example Load: Garage Cleanout

Material	Example weight	Example rate	Example payout
Steel / Iron (clean)	200 lb	\$0.07 / lb	\$14.00
Aluminum (mixed)	40 lb	\$0.45 / lb	\$18.00
Copper (#2)	10 lb	\$2.75 / lb	\$27.50
Brass (clean)	15 lb	\$1.85 / lb	\$27.75
Insulated wire (mixed)	25 lb	\$0.80 / lb	\$20.00

Total (example): \$107.25

These numbers are for illustration only. Your grade and local market price will change the payout.

Example Load: Small Starter Trip

Material	Example weight	Example rate	Example payout
Extension cords (mixed)	30 lb	\$0.90 / lb	\$27.00
Copper pipe (clean)	12 lb	\$3.20 / lb	\$38.40
Electric motor	1 motor	\$8.00 each	\$8.00

Disclaimer: Prices change daily and vary by grade. Examples are for learning only.

Total (example): \$73.40

Important price disclaimer

Scrap prices can change day-to-day based on the market, the yard's pricing, and your material grade. Use the examples on this page as a guide to understand how payouts are calculated, not as a guarantee.



Scrapping a Car

Paperwork, prep, payout factors, and what to expect



Paperwork you will need

- Photo ID (often required).
- Proof of ownership: title or required paperwork.
- If the title shows a lien, you may need a lien release.
- If it is not in your name, call ahead first.

Prep before you tow

- Remove personal items and paperwork from the car.
- Bring keys if you have them (helps move the vehicle).
- Do NOT drain fluids unless the yard asks you to.
- If you remove parts, keep the car safe to tow.

How yards pay for vehicles

- Most vehicles are paid as “scrap iron” based on weight.
- Some yards pay separately for batteries or wheels.
- You may see deductions if major parts are missing.

What can change the payout

- Vehicle weight (bigger/heavier usually pays more).
- Missing catalytic converter, battery, wheels, or engine.
- Aftermarket or aluminum wheels (sometimes separate).
- Current scrap market price (changes often).

Typical steps at the yard

1. Check in and confirm paperwork requirements
2. Vehicle VIN recorded (and sometimes photos)
3. Vehicle weighed (or weighed by yard equipment)
4. Unload/drop the car in the vehicle area
5. Payment issued (cash or check depending on local rules)

Important

Rules and required paperwork vary by yard and by state. Always call ahead before towing a vehicle in. Any prices or payout examples in this guide are for illustration only and may change without notice.



Your First Yard Trip

What to bring and a simple first-week plan



What to bring

- Photo ID (often required)
- Gloves for unloading
- Straps/tarp to secure your load
- Sorted bins or labeled bags
- Notebook (or phone notes) to track what paid best

Simple first-week plan

- Practice magnet testing and basic sorting
- Collect from your home and friends/family (with permission)
- Take a small, clean, sorted load to the yard
- Ask how they grade metal for best prices
- Update your bins and routine for next time

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