Food Sorting Guidelines - Loaves & Fishes Community Pantry

1. Safety First!

a. Discard cans with leaks, severe dents, excessive rust or severe wrinkles around side seams. Discard all containers that are bulging or have puffed ends. Containers that show signs of contamination (gnawed containers or rotten smells) should also be thrown out.

b. Check that containers are unopened and food contents are not exposed. Discard jars with loose caps or bulging "safety" seal. Discards pouches with leaking seals, holes, or scratches that could leak.

c. Loaves & Fishes cannot distribute homemade canned goods, bulk items that have been repackaged, foods that are excessively outdated (6 months past the "Use thru" date), alcoholic beverages, or prescriptive medical supplements.

2. Sort by category

a. Sort donated items into basic food categories

Starches & Grains	Pasta, spaghetti, stuffing, potato mix, crackers, rice, dried grains, cereals, oatmeal, granola bars, macaroni & cheese, skillet dinners
Canned fruits & vegetables	Canned green beans, peas, corn, vegetable blends, dried peas or beans, tomato products, spaghetti sauces, applesauce, dried fruits, peaches, pears, jams, jellies
Soups, dinners & proteins	Canned soups, broths, dry soup mixes, chicken stock, stews, canned chicken or meat, peanut butter, pork & beans, chili
Miscellaneous	Condiments, spices, cooking oil, cake or cookie mixes, dessert breads, pie fillings, baking ingredients, snacks, chips, cookies, popcorn, candy
Non-food items	Household cleaners, laundry detergent, toilet paper, Kleenex, paper towels, diapers, wipes, personal care items, shampoo, toothpaste, lotions

3. Box carefully

a. Boxes are better than bags for storing and transporting.
b. Use smaller boxes for heavy canned foods, so that they aren't too heavy to lift (< 40 lbs.)
c. Place fragile items that are easy to crush on the top, heavy items on the bottom.
d. Fill the boxes full, so that they don't collapse (or bulge) making them difficult to stack.
e. Taping the top of the boxes is not necessary or recommended.