



ecology center

# Top 10 Strategies to Get Plastic Out of Your Life

from Beth Terry of MyPlasticFreeLife.com



Plastic-Free Living

factsheet

## 1. Carry reusable shopping bags.

Carry whatever works for you. Canvas tote, backpack, messenger bag... My favorites are ChicoBags because even though they are made from synthetic materials, they compress into their own attached stuff sack and are easy to remember. I always keep a few of them in my purse or backpack and am never without a shopping bag.

## 2. Give up bottled water.

Not only does it come in a plastic bottle, but tremendous resources are used to extract, bottle, and ship it. And many brands of bottled water are simply filtered tap water. Get a reusable stainless steel bottle (like Klean Kanteen) or stainless steel travel mug, fill it up with tap water before leaving the house, and refill it at water fountains wherever you happen to be.

## 3. Buy from bulk bins as often as possible.

If you have access to grocery stores that sell foods unpackaged in bulk bins (Natural food stores and coops are most likely to do this), bring your own reusable cloth bags, containers, or jars to the store to avoid taking new plastic bags. Have your containers weighed when you first arrive before filling them up so the cashier can deduct the weight of the container when you check out. You can even use your own containers for meats, cheeses, and prepared foods in many stores.

## 4. Shop your local farmers' market.

Farmers' markets are a great way to buy fresh, local produce without plastic, as long as you remember to bring your own bags. Normally, the fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets don't even have those little plastic stickers on them.

## 5. Carry your own containers, utensils, and travel mug for take out food and leftovers.

Request take out places use your container instead of their disposable one. The Ecology Center Store carries many types of to-go items, such as stainless steel containers, mugs and bottles, travel utensils, and reusable drinking straws. Or, to save money, use what you already have: utensils from the silverware drawer wrapped in a cloth napkin; reused glass jars; etc.

## 6. Avoid single-serving sizes.

Even when you can't avoid plastic entirely, you can greatly reduce the amount you use by choosing larger sized containers and splitting them, rather than individual serving sizes. For example, buy a large container of yogurt and scoop it into individual bowls or to-go containers rather than single-size plastic yogurt cups. Buy a large container of juice rather than single juice boxes. And avoid anything that is individually-wrapped.

## 7. Compost food waste to avoid plastic garbage bags.

Use your municipality's compost bin (if available) for wet food waste or invest in your own backyard or worm compost bin. If you get the wet stuff out of your garbage can and recycle whatever you can, you can reduce the need for bin liners. Collect whatever trash you do generate in a reused paper bag, or line waste cans with old newspapers.

## 8. Look for solid or powdered versions of the cleaning and personal care products that you use.

Examples include bar hand soap instead of liquid soap; solid shampoo bars; powder dishwasher soap and laundry soap OR soapnuts (suitable for use with greywater systems); deodorant in plastic-free packaging or plain baking soda. The Ecology Center Store carries many of these items.

## Top 10 Strategies to Get Plastic Out of Your Life (continued)

**9. When ordering products online, send a message to the seller requesting zero plastic packaging.**

Do this ahead of time so you don't end up surprised by Styrofoam packing peanuts or plastic air pillows. Amazon.com now has some products packaged in "Frustration-Free Packaging." And small businesses like the sellers on Etsy.com are often very happy to accommodate requests for less packaging.

**10. Before buying new durable plastic products, try to borrow, rent, or buy used first.**

Use Craigslist to find electronics. Check out DVDs from the library or download or stream movies online. Check to see if your community has a tool lending library before buying a tool you'll only use a few times. Share stuff through Freecycle or barter exchange sites.

**Above all: Pay attention.**

Everything we buy has some impact on the planet. We all have to consume, but let's practice mindful consumption and get off the convenience-driven treadmill that is trashing the planet.

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### Further Resources:

To connect with others in the Bay Area working to reduce their plastic consumption and share resources and support, please join the **Google Group: Plastic-Free SF Bay.** ([groups.google.com/d/forum/plasticfreesfbay](https://groups.google.com/d/forum/plasticfreesfbay))

Visit [myplasticfreelife.com](http://myplasticfreelife.com) for many, many more suggestions for plastic-free alternatives and to order the book: *Plastic-Free: How I Kicked the Plastic Habit and How You Can too.*

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