

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Eliminate Plastic



eliminate plastic

Everyday, mountains of used plastic consumer products and packaging head to landfills, wasting the materials and energy that created them. Many of us recycle our plastic containers at curbside and although this is important, an even better effort is to reduce the amount of plastics we buy and to reuse the items we do buy. Reducing and reusing can divert millions of tons of garbage from landfills every year.

We offer the tips below to inspire you to reduce, reuse, and trim plastic from your life.

Reduce and Eliminate

Initial actions you might take:

- Bring your own cup or thermos when purchasing beverages away from home.
- Avoid plastic by buying in glass or metal whenever possible.
- Look for items with little or no packaging.
- Avoid individually wrapped portions (cheese slices, juice boxes, etc.)
- Bring your own containers and bags to stores and refill or reuse them.
- Purchase items in containers that can be refilled.
- Eliminate packaging by buying in bulk and large containers.

Take these next steps:

- Drink filtered tap water. Fill your own bottles with water, eliminate waste, and save money.
- Buy used items - electronics, furniture, clothing, bikes, household items.
- Use reusable tableware, plates, and cloth napkins when hosting a party.
- Refill toner cartridges, pens, and other office supplies.
- Avoid disposable products: bags, plastic utensils, razors, pens, lighters, batteries.
- Urge your grocery store to carry products in bulk, or those that have reduced or recycled packaging.
- Ask your nursery if they'll take back plastic plant pots.
- Choose long-lasting metal or wood toys and products rather than plastic.
- Rent items that will only be used a short time. See if your community has a tool lending library.
- Complete the loop by buying products made with recycled materials, such as recycled paper and glass.
- Contact the manufacturer of products whose packaging isn't recyclable and ask them to choose better packaging.

Find more ideas for how to reduce on the back.

factsheet

Eliminate Plastic (continued)

Plastic Type	Representative Products	Alternative Products
#1 PET	Soda bottles, water bottles, clear bottles and wide-mouth containers for apple sauce, puddings, gelatin, deli takeout containers, salsa containers	Buy in glass and reuse those jars/bottles. Use canning jars for food storage; they come in a variety of sizes. Reuse deli takeout containers (but don't microwave in them.)
#2 HDPE	Opaque bottles and containers for milk, juice, beverages. Opaque wide-mouth containers for yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese, ricotta, spreadable cheeses. Also detergent bottles, grocery bags	Buy beverages and foods in glass wherever possible. Source yogurts in glass jars and ceramic crocks. Some spreadable cheeses come in crocks, too. Buy powdered detergent in paper containers. Bring your own bags to the grocery store.
#3 PVC	Shrink wrap	Purchase from the butcher counter to avoid shrink-wrapped meats. Get cheeses from shops that will cut blocks.
#4 LDPE	Produce bags. Trash bags	Reuse produce bags and then phase out their use with cloth bags. Reuse plastic mesh bags such as onions and oranges come in. Try to buy trash bags with post-consumer content if you must use plastic.
#5 PP	Drinking straws. Margarine tubs, some yogurt tubs	Eliminate the straws. Purchase margarine (and butter) by the cube. Look into yogurt in glass jars or ceramic crocks.
#6 PS	Foam plastic takeout containers, and coffee cups. Foam trays for meats. Foam plastic plates and bowls. Plastic forks/spoons/knives. Packing peanuts, to-go clamshells	Sit down and eat instead of getting food to-go or bring your own reusable to-go container. Take a commuter mug to coffee shops. Purchase meat at a butcher counter. Use metal plates and cups, and real silverware, on picnics.
#7 Other	Tupperware, polycarbonate water bottles, storage containers, all plastics that are not #1 - 6, unmarked containers and lids	Use stainless steel water bottles, or reuse glass beverage bottles. Use canning jars and glass containers for storage.