

## Why and How to Ditch Plastic

### Why:

- Plastic comes from oil & gas and takes a lot of energy to make. Plastic production and carbon emissions are expected to quadruple by 2050.
- Plastic can only be made into recycled products 2-3 times
- Due to recycled plastic being more expensive and lower quality, its use is unlikely to replace or even be much more than the current 10% recycled of all plastic used worldwide.
- Plastic is in all corners of the world from the deep Mariana Trench to the top of Mount Everest.
- Plastic chemicals leach out of containers damaging cells and causing allergic response. Microplastics are present in the placentas of the unborn and are in our veins and lungs.
- There are huge waste plastic gyres in all the oceans; the biggest one in the Pacific (the Great Pacific Garbage Patch) covers 994,194 miles - that is 3 times the size of France! It is estimated that there are 250 pieces of debris for every human in the world.

Here are **100 ways you can cut back on plastic**: from <https://myplasticfreelife.com/plasticfreeguide/>

1. Carry reusable shopping bags for groceries & everything you buy.
2. Give up bottled water - Get a reusable stainless steel bottle or travel mug.
3. Carry your own stainless steel containers for take-out food and leftovers.
4. Carry a stainless steel travel mug at all times for coffee and other drinks while out in the world.
5. Carry reusable utensils and glass drinking straws.
6. When ordering pizza, say “no little white plastic table” in the middle of the pizza box.
7. Treat yourself to an ice cream cone; store bought ice cream containers are lined with plastic – bring your own container & have it hand packed.
8. Cut out sodas, juices, and other plastic-bottled beverages; eat fresh fruit instead.
9. Let go of frozen convenience foods in plastic containers.
10. Say no to plastic produce bags; put most produce directly into the cart or use cloth produce bags.
11. Shop your local farmers market.
12. Return containers for berries, cherry tomatoes, and other small fruits and vegetables to the farmers market to be reused.
13. Bring your own container for meat and prepared foods. Ask the butcher at the meat counter to fill them.
14. Buy fresh bakery bread that comes in either paper bags or no bags. Store in a cloth bag in a recycled popcorn tin container.
15. Choose milk in returnable glass bottles, not plastic coated cardboard.
16. Buy large wheels of unwrapped cheese. Cut & freeze the portions you won't use within 2 weeks.
17. Choose wine bottled in glass with natural cork stoppers. This supports endangered cork forests.
18. Learn to love the bulk bins.
19. Even if you live in an area that does not have bulk food stores, look for non-perishable goods in large size packages, which will decrease the amount of plastic used overall.
20. Choose plastic-free chewing gum. Almost all chewing gum is made of plastic.
21. Clean with vinegar and water. Buy it in glass bottles. I use a mixture of 1 part vinegar to 3 parts water as an all-purpose spray cleaner (storing it in a reused spray bottle) and produce wash.

22. Baking soda is a fantastic scouring powder with many uses.
23. Use powdered dishwasher detergent in a cardboard box. (Ecover)
24. Hand wash dishes without plastic using baking soda or bar soap. For tougher residue, use a Chore Boy copper scrubber.
25. Use natural cleaning cloths and scrubbers instead of plastic scrubbers and synthetic sponges.
26. Compressed natural cellulose sponges are often sold without any plastic packaging because they don't need to be kept moist; they expand when wet. Skoy cloths are made from cotton and cellulose, work like a cloth, absorb like a sponge, and can take the place of 15 rolls of paper towels. There are always good old rags - the greenest option of all.
27. Wash clothes with homemade laundry soap and stain removers. Borax and Washing Soda come in cardboard boxes. Treat laundry stains with a borax/water paste.
28. If you already own a Swiffer mop, try switching to a reusable pad or check out the reusable Swiffer cloths from Juniperseed Mercantile.
29. Use natural rubber gloves. Casabella 100% latex gloves lined with 100% cotton flocking. or If You Care brand FSC-certified natural rubber gloves.
30. Check labels of personal care products! Did you know some facial scrubs and other personal care products contain tiny plastic beads? Avoid anything with "polyethylene" listed as an ingredient.
31. Switch to bar soap instead of liquid soap.
32. Give up shampoo in plastic bottles. The "No-Poo" method uses a baking soda & water wash and an apple cider vinegar rinse or solid shampoo bars:  
Aquarian Bath shampoo bars  
J.R. Liggett's Old Fashioned shampoo bar
33. Try hair salves and pomades in metal tins or glass jars. [Made-On Second Life Hair Butter](#) for taming frizzies if you have curly hair like I do.
34. Color hair with henna purchased without plastic packaging.
35. Baking soda is the best deodorant EVER. Use baking soda mixed with a few drops of tea tree oil applied to dry underarms with a reusable cotton round.
36. Try solid shave soap instead of canned shave cream, any rich soap bar will do.
37. Choose lotions and lip balms in plastic-free containers. Organic Essence packages its body lotions in compostable cardboard jars and its lip balms in ingenious cardboard tubes that squeeze from the end.
38. Switch from a plastic razor to a second-hand safety razor.
39. Reconsider how you clean your teeth. Bite Toothpaste Bits. Find plastic-free, zero waste dental floss  
Read the truth about "biodegradable" toothbrushes and compare less plastic toothbrush alternatives [here](#) and [here](#).
40. Coconut oil is great for grown-ups. But be aware the oil-based lubes don't play well with latex.
41. Choose toilet paper that's not wrapped in plastic. Who Gives a Crap brand toilet paper comes in a cardboard box with paper-wrapped rolls. No plastic. They offer a choice of recycled paper or bamboo. And the company gives 50% of its profits to build toilets and sanitation in developing countries. Seventh Generation recycled individually wrapped toilet paper can be ordered by the case through Amazon.com. It comes in a cardboard box without any plastic wrapping.
42. Use plastic-free feminine hygiene products. Some of the options include washable cloth liners and pads. One great brand is Luna Pads, which are made of organic cotton.

- Some women prefer the Diva Cup, which can be washed and reinserted.
43. Look into plastic-free sunscreen options: Balm! Baby and Avasol. Read about them here.
  44. Explore plastic-free hair accessories and tools.
  45. Keep your own reusable foodware at the office. I brought a plate, bowl, glass, and utensils to keep at my desk.
  46. Carry lunches in reusable stainless containers or cloth bags. A few examples of good lunch container options are:
    - PlanetBox lunch boxes
    - Life Without Plastic lunch sacks and stainless containers
    - Life Without Plastic insulated lunch bag
    - Eco Lunchbox containers.
    - LunchBots stainless snack and sandwich containers
    - To-Go Ware tiffins and individual sidekick containers
  47. Choose reusable cloth sandwich/snack bags over plastic baggies.
  48. Choose glass or stainless steel food storage containers and reuse what you already have. We save nearly all glass jars and bottles for purchasing bulk foods and for storing leftovers in the refrigerator or even the freezer. When we run out of jars, we store leftovers in bowls with saucers on top instead of plastic wrap. Bowls with saucers are great for stacking. The key to freezing foods in glass is not to fill the jar too full since the food will expand inside the container. The other caveat is not to heat the glass too quickly. Let foods thaw at room temperature to avoid glass breakage.

Another option for the refrigerator or freezer are the flat-topped airtight stainless steel containers from Life Without Plastic. Their flat top makes them easy to stack and the fact that they are airtight means food can be stored longer. Read about my favorite container here.
  49. Try natural beeswax coated cloth wraps instead of plastic cling film.
  50. Choose a glass blender. Avoid the high-speed blenders that come with a plastic pitcher. Those containers contain endocrine-disrupting chemicals. My Waring Pro is all glass and metal and works just fine.
  51. Spin salad without plastic.
  52. Learn to preserve foods without plastic. Can foods in glass jars or dehydrate produce to keep through the winter.
  53. Avoid non-stick cookware - Cookware coated with Teflon or other resins give off toxic perfluorochemicals when heated.
  54. Replace plastic with stainless steel ice cube trays and Popsicle molds.
  55. Don't buy water filter cartridges unless necessary. Brita has teamed up with Preserve to create a way to recycle the plastic cartridges. Here are the details: <https://www.brita.com/recycling-filters/>
  56. Make your own homemade yogurt without a yogurt maker! It's easier than you might think, using only a Thermos, a pot, a thermometer, some milk, and some yogurt from a previous batch. (Your first batch can be store-bought.) See recipe and instructions here.
  57. Make your own soy or nut milk.
  58. Make your own condiments. Most are not difficult. I've learned to make my own chocolate syrup, mayonnaise, mustard, and ketchup. I squeeze fresh lemon and lime juice and keep it in glass jars in the refrigerator. And we make our own hummus.
  59. Make your own snacks and energy bars.

60. Acquire necessary plastic items used instead of new. Check second-hand stores, Freecycle, Craigslist or borrow. Car-sharing. Tool-lending.
61. Repair things when they break.
62. Make your own glue. Here's a recipe for homemade wheat paste that really works.
63. Avoid disposable plastic pens. I use pencils as much as possible and for times when a pen is necessary, I have switched to a refillable fountain pen with a cartridge converter that allows me to refill the pen from a bottle of ink rather than buying new plastic cartridges.
64. Compost food waste to avoid plastic garbage bags (and keep organics out of the landfill.)
65. I bought a 100% recycled plastic Urban Compost Tumbler and started composting. This solves several plastic problems. First, since we no longer put wet stuff in the garbage, we don't need plastic garbage bags of any kind (bio- or petro-based.) Read more about collecting garbage without plastic trash bags.
66. Choose natural cat litter. Integrity cat litter is made from wheat and comes in a paper bag. It's also certified flushable. We feel okay about flushing our cats' poop because they've tested negative for toxoplasma gondii (picked up from rodents & harmful to sea otters, if you are near the coast) and they are indoor-only cats.
67. Choose pet toys and furniture made from natural materials instead of plastic. The best cat toys of all - wine corks, hands down. We found a bamboo/sisal scratching post instead of synthetic carpet. Cardboard cat scratchers are great.
68. Avoid feeding pets from plastic bowls, they cause pet acne!
69. Buy secondhand pet supplies instead of new.
70. Learn to make homemade pet food without plastic. BPA-lined cans that come shrink-wrapped in plastic or dry pet food in bags lined with plastic. Our recipe does include a supplement powder that comes in a plastic bottle, but it lasts two months.
71. When traveling, bring your own water bottle, even on the plane! You can't bring an empty bottle through security and fill it up at the drinking fountain on the other side.
72. Bring your own snacks on the plane, too. Bring your own sandwiches or containers of fruit, cut veggies, trail mix, or other snacks. But avoid liquid or semi-solid foods when flying.
73. Bring your own utensils on the road and in the air.
74. Bring your own travel mug.
75. When flying, bring your own headphones. Most planes will offer you new headphones in plastic packaging, but you won't need those if you come prepared with your own.
76. Bring your own personal care products. Skip the free travel size shampoos, soaps, and lotions offered by hotels. Just because they're free doesn't mean we should take them. Instead, fill up your own reusable travel-size containers at home. If you're not checking baggage, make sure they fit in your regulation Ziploc bag (U.S.residents).
77. Refuse the incredibly expensive mini bar drinks & snacks. They all come in plastic packages or bottles. Find real food to eat.
78. Choose plastic-free camping equipment. Found 2<sup>nd</sup> hand:
  - A vintage canvas, wood, & metal camping cot on eBay
  - A secondhand double-walled 10-gallon container for water (also eBay)
  - A mostly cotton tent
79. Find Do-It-Yourself alternatives for over-the-counter remedies. Last winter, I tried making my own homemade cough syrup and looked into natural remedies for heartburn. Lately, I've been checking into herbs that can be used to promote sleep. I also learned to do acupuncture to treat a

headache. Take a look at my favorite plastic-free cold remedies.

80. Use a handkerchief instead of paper tissue. Check out the neat [HankyBook](#).
81. Avoid buying new plastic clothing: polyester, acrylic, lycra, spandex, nylon. All synthetic fabrics create microfiber pollution when laundered.
82. Shop thrift stores. Buying gently-used secondhand clothing and shoes is a good way to get the styles you want without buying new plastic.
83. Make your own clothes. Choose natural fabrics.
84. Look for plastic-free shoes.
85. Alter and modify old clothes into new.
86. Bring your own beverage container to parties and events. stainless steel wine glass
87. Throw a zero waste party. Ask guests to bring their own dishes or at least cups or stock up on thrift store utensils and mugs (mixing and matching crazy mugs can be fun) especially for parties. Ask guests to bring containers for leftovers.
88. Re-think your Christmas tree. There are “trees” made from recycled cardboard, wood, or even recycled glass bottles.
89. Skip holiday plastic tchotchkes. Make your own plastic-free vegan Easter eggs.
90. Learn strategies for green gift giving. Give only what will be truly appreciated. Opt for experiences or services (like restaurant meals, tickets to events, your help with a task) over stuff.
91. Consider giving charitable gift cards.
92. Request plastic-free gifts for yourself. If you don't need any new things, request a donation to your favorite charity, perhaps.
93. Wrap gifts with reusable cloth bags.
94. Request zero plastic packaging when ordering online. I include a message to the seller requesting zero plastic or Styrofoam packaging, including plastic tape. (See my packaging policy here.) When this doesn't work, I've started to send back unwanted plastic packaging with a letter of explanation. Reuse packaging sent to you.
95. Get off mailing lists to avoid plastic envelope windows. I have switched to online billing and online statements; canceled subscriptions; and called to have my name removed from mailing lists.
96. Look for second-hand electronics, games, and toys first. Choose refurbished equipment from certified “e-stewards.” Learn how you can do your part to combat “planned obsolescence.”
97. Take care of what you already have.
98. Avoid buying new CDs and DVDs. Instead, I download and stream music and movies and borrow DVDs from the library. (This may not be as big of an issue in 2019 as it was when I first wrote this list in 2007!) Learn to recycle old disks.
99. Choose healthier electronics. For example, thinksound ear buds are PVC-free, made from wood, and come packaged with almost no plastic. Find DIY solutions for techno needs.
100. Avoid the worst types of plastic.- Polyvinyl Chloride (#3 PVC), Polystyrene toxic to brain & nervous system (#6 PS), & Polycarbonate – contains BPA an endocrine disruptor (#7 Other).