

# 5 Steps to Reduce Your Plastic Waste

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**WWF** and **Impact Hub** [join forces for the oceans](#). This blog post is part of a wider campaign aiming to share knowledge about environmental challenges within our communities.



**Plastics impact our lives daily** — from being largely used for electronics, airbags, helmets, and protective gear to save lives to cups and even the clothes we wear. But the problem is that some forms of it are ‘downcycled’ and can never be used again.

To effectively illustrate the current plastic crisis, only 7% of the 33 million tons of plastic waste we generate annually is actually recycled. The rest is distributed to landfills and major water bodies, which helped create the Great Pacific Ocean Garbage Patch — **the greatest accumulation of plastic waste in the world.**

Certain plastics can only be broken down by 130 degrees of heat from an industrial composter, and without it, the fragments left behind create adverse effects both to the environment and human health. Mixing recyclable plastics with biodegradable waste is not a good idea either since its integration may only make the plastics non-renewable.

By now most people know what [damage plastics do to our environment and physical health](#). What some don't know is that we are already doing numerous practices that can help diminish its adverse effects. There are small things we can do in our daily routine that won't break the bank or cause major behavioral changes, yet could truly make a difference if done collectively.

Here are five things you can do each day to help mitigate the plastic crisis:

## **Refrain from using plastic bags.**

[Most stores now encourage consumers to use paper bags](#) or bring their own reusable eco-bags rather than plastic ones. For a couple of products, it lessens overhead costs and establishes a company's favorable stand for sustainable development. Still, companies around the world use one trillion plastic bags annually, which also translates to the consumption of millions of gallons of petroleum for their production, distribution, and disposal.

[In 2007, San Francisco was the first city to implement plastic-free grocery stores](#). Today, the city is on track in realizing its zero-waste target by next year: proof that reducing the use of plastics can truly be achieved. Refraining from using plastic bags for your groceries and shopping items will send a clear message that a plastic-free community is achievable through the conscious effort of all.

## **Use metal straws.**

Drinking straws were brought about by the Sumerians and were first used for beer. These straws were made of the precious blue metamorphic stone *lapis lazuli*. In Argentina, *bombillas* were made of sugar cane and metal for drinking *mate* tea already centuries ago. Plastic straws only came into existence after World War II when Sip-N-See mass-produced polyethylene and acetate straws for sodas. In retrospect, what used to be a valuable tool made of exquisite materials and intended for traditional beverages, morphed into cheap and overexploited products sold by commercial companies for profit.

However, more people are aware of the [damage these little plastic straws make](#) and have created alternatives to prevent further damage to the

environment. What can be your role in this? Start by using straws made from recycled material, reusable metal straws, or avoid the use of straws completely.

## **Reject plastic bottles.**

More and more people are now switching to refillable water bottles for their gym and fitness regimen or marathon runs, instead of purchasing bottled water, and for good reason. Bottled water uses 17 million barrels of oil for every 50 billion units per year—a process that also releases greenhouse gasses into the Earth's atmosphere, and contributes to generating more hard-to-recycle garbage. Environment-friendly makers of refillable water bottles are even upgrading their products by installing filters to ensure water potability in places where drinkable water is not easily accessible.

Unfortunately, almost 1 million bottles of water are still sold globally per minute, and **only one in every five bottles is properly recycled**. Before you buy your next bottle of water, stop and think about how 8 million tons of plastic enter the oceans every year and that the number will further increase in the coming years. Aside from the environmental consequences, also consider the money you can save by using refillable bottles: at \$2 per bottle of water, and four bottles a day, you can save \$3,000 per year by making the switch.

## **Buy products without plastic packaging.**

There is now an assortment of products available in supermarkets which don't use plastic packaging. Bar soaps, clothing, and even fresh produce are now being sold in stores sans the plastic. European supermarkets are already taking the lead reducing oil-based containers and using compostable replacements instead.

Zero-waste grocery stores all over the world are now present, where you can buy chewable toothpaste or olive oil dispensed into your own container. Since more grocery chains are jumping the environment-friendly bandwagon, we can now see that eliminating plastic waste is not entirely impossible.

As corporations are doing their part to reduce waste, it's also our responsibility to support this initiative. Try looking for stores in your area that support this movement!

## **Consider joining green initiatives.**

All over the world, there are [numerous green communities](#) you can join to help fight plastic pollution. Massive actions are being propelled worldwide to prevent the plastic crisis from snowballing and even nations are jumping in on the bandwagon. Canada and Peru are on track to banning single-use plastic in the coming years, while cities like San Diego and Washington, D.C. are putting an end to styrofoam and plastic straws in food products. If you really want to put your advocacy into action, consider being a true green warrior by joining the nearest green initiative near you.

[Worldwide initiatives are continually being set up](#) to raise awareness and promote better alternatives to plastic — which creates fruitful discussions and efforts among the general population. And although at times, it may seem like singular efforts are not enough, through our collective and consistent effort of reducing plastic waste, we can all make a change as we move closer to a sustainable, waste-free world.

Impact Hubs around the world and WWF are joining forces to battle ocean plastic pollution, [click here to discover how you can help make a change.](#)

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