



Tips for Living Without Plastic

WHAT HAPPENS TO PLASTIC?

Because America has a well-developed trash collection and disposal system, most of the plastic that we throw away ends up in landfills. Unfortunately, there are other countries that don't properly manage their garbage and some even dump it directly into the ocean. Often their garbage will be dumped near or in rivers that flow to the ocean or communal dumps where stray bits are swept up by wind and cast into the ocean. According to Ocean Conservancy, a U.S. environmental non-profit, a large percentage of garbage is submerged beneath the surface of the ocean where it wreaks havoc on the aquatic ecosystem.

“At this rate, we would expect nearly one ton of plastic for every three tons of fish in our oceans by 2025...”¹”

¹ <https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-01-13/5-countries-dump-more-plastic-oceans-rest-world-combined>

WHAT CAN I DO?

The rest of the world is adopting our Western-style appetite for convenience. Americans have set the standard for lifestyle and the rest of the world wants it. While changing this mentality is difficult, you can help by following these nine tips for living with less plastic.

- **Use your own shopping bag.**
 - Buy a few of them as they are very useful for other things like carrying your lunch, gym clothes, beach items, etc.
- **Carry a reusable water bottle.**
 - The average American uses over 150 plastic bottles per year
 - **Bring your own coffee cup.** <https://greenfuture.io/recycling/coffee-cup/>
 - In the US, 50 BILLION disposable coffee cups are thrown away each year; most are not recyclable.
 - **Say no to disposable straws and cutlery. Americans use 500 MILLION straws on a daily basis.** <https://news.nationalgeographic.com/2017/04/plastic-straws-ocean-trash-environment/>
- **Skip the plastic produce bags.**
 - Bring similar multiple reusable containers; keep one empty and ask the store to subtract the weight.
- **Bring your lunch to work, packing it in reusable containers.**
 - Cut back on take-out food and container waste.
- **Store leftovers in glass containers.**

– Consider using Etee reusable wraps.

(<https://www.shopetee.com/>)

- **Share these tips with your family and friends.**

PLASTIC WATER BOTTLE FACTS

Plastic water bottles—talk about a waste. Not only are you potentially overpaying for what may or may not be tap water, but producing them depletes valuable resources and they turn up as a nuisance everywhere.

<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/uploadedFiles/curriculum/outdoored/programs/waterbottlefactpages.pdf>

- **Americans buy an estimated 29.8 billion plastic water bottles each year, averaging 167 bottles per person.**
- **80% of these bottles are not recycled and end up in the landfill, maybe, or are incinerated.**
- **17 million barrels of oil produce these plastic bottles – enough fuel for 1 million cars a year.**
- **16.4 billion gallons of water are used just to make the bottles – none of this water makes it into the bottle!**
- **2.5 million tons of CO₂ are released during production.**
- **Trucks deliver these water bottles full, which weigh quite a bit. The CO₂ from the truck delivery is not accounted for here.**
- **For health reasons, many plastics used for food and drink must be new – only HDPE plastic is reusable.**
- **Recycling plastic takes up to 15% more energy than producing it in the first place.**

YOU CAN HELP BY USING REUSABLE WATER BOTTLES

GREEN IDEAS

A new feature for this month will be for the Green Team to showcase an idea that can be used by all to reduce waste. This month, we'd like to showcase paper towel usage. While using hand towels for the bathroom is unsanitary, consider using fewer towels each time you dry your hands. A reduction of one towel per visit can add up. Also, if you do your dishes after lunch, consider bringing your own dish towel to dry them. Bring the dish towel home once a week for washing.

**THE SMALL THINGS WE DO DAILY
WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

If you have ideas about green initiatives for SPEC Services to consider, please submit your ideas to the Green Team!
Contact Greg Lilliston for more information (GLilliston@SPECservices.com)