

Reducing Waste Before You Bring It Home

There are many ways to reduce your waste and a great place to start is in the store. As you shop, consider the end of life of each product or material you purchase. Think about how long the item will last, what materials the packaging is made of, alternative options, and how necessary the product is.

Buying items that last longer, are made more sustainably, and are recyclable or reusable is a great first step. It can be overwhelming to try to change your shopping habits, so instead, try starting with just one type of product. Here are some suggestions to help get you started!

Toiletries: instead of buying shampoo, conditioner, soaps, creams, etc. in plastic bottles, look for alternatives such as shampoo and conditioner bars, bar soap, and creams in glass jars. Bar soaps are often more concentrated which last longer, and are packaged in paperboard, which is easily recyclable and sometimes compostable.

Dishes: buy reusable tableware and silverware instead of single-use, non-recyclable plastic. Bonus points if you buy dishes from a thrift store! For times when you still need something more disposable, choose paper products instead of polystyrene (styrofoam), which is difficult to recycle and generally not accepted in residential curbside or drop-off recycling facilities.

Cleaning products: Many companies now sell cleaning spray concentrates that can be diluted at home in reusable glass spray bottles. You can also make your own with a recipe found online. Here's an easy disinfectant cleaning spray recipe that I use at home, 1 part water, 1 part distilled vinegar, and 6-10 drops of essential oil. I like to use citrus or peppermint with thieves to help fight off those pesky cold and flu viruses.

Laundry products: you can reduce plastic waste by buying larger-size bottles of laundry detergent and softener. Laundry detergent sheets and many powdered detergents come in paperboard containers, meaning you can ditch the plastic altogether, plus you are further helping the environment by cutting down on how much water is unnecessarily shipped in liquid detergent. Also, try reusable wool dryer balls instead of dryer sheets.

Single-use containers: bring your own to-go containers and carry a reusable water bottle made of stainless steel, glass, or recycled plastic. Bring your own reusable shopping bags or use paper bags that can be recycled curbside or at drop-off facilities or even used in compost.

Electronics and other gadgets: buy rechargeable electronics or items with replaceable batteries, items made from recycled materials, bulk packaging, or non-individually wrapped items, and don't forget the thrift store! You can also borrow instead of buy - check out your local library, many libraries have a "library of things" with a variety of items to "check out" such as games, tools, office supplies, electronics, and more!