



WWF

TOGETHER
@ WORK™

REDUCE YOUR WASTE

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MATERIAL WASTE GUIDE

PLASTIC IN OUR ENVIRONMENT

Plastic waste is choking our planet – polluting the air, water, and soil both people and wildlife need to survive. Getting rid of it is not the solution. Modern plastics offer many benefits to humanity – in fields as diverse as medicine, transportation, and electronics. But it has no place in nature.

Plastic waste poses a growing threat to Earth's critical ecosystems and species. Every year, the world produces roughly 300 million tons of plastic, and 8-12 million tons of that plastic ends up in our ocean.

A recent Pew Charitable Trusts report shows that **if we remain on our current path, the rate of plastic flow into the world's oceans will triple by 2040.**

But this statistic only tells half the story. Plastic helps protect food by delaying spoilage, contamination and damage, thus reducing food waste (by up to 254,000 metric tons annually in the US alone). The less food we waste, the less resources are used to replace it, avoiding significant greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, and depletion of water globally.

If we can't live without plastic, we must learn to live with it. We can begin by getting rid of some unnecessary plastic, such as plastic bags and straws, and recycling items after use. But we must also rethink how we source, design, manage and reuse plastic, and create an economy that demands products with higher recycled content. Then, we will be on a path to doing more with less.

Material waste is a global issue, and everyone is part of the waste cycle.

Every product has an environmental footprint – from extraction of resources, production, distribution, to disposal. And each stage along this product life cycle affects our air, water, and planet. We extract tons of material from the Earth to create products that enrich our quality of life, and when we're finished using the products, most of them are discarded, and some of that material leaks back into our environment in the form of pollution. When thinking about waste, most people think about the disposal of materials, after you're done using them. Yet, waste can happen at any stage of a product's life.

All materials that are unwanted, unusable, or cannot be recycled are considered material waste, including plastic, rubber, leather, textiles, wood, and glass.

Materials like plastic are found everywhere – in our wallets, our homes, and our schools. Unfortunately, plastic often ends up in our rivers and our oceans.

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THINK ABOUT TIMING

When grocery shopping, choose meat or produce that is appropriately packaged to last until you are ready to prepare it. Proper packaging will extend the shelf life of your purchases. Also consider frozen options when it comes to vegetables. They retain the same level of nutrients as fresh produce and last much longer.



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RESEAL TO REUSE

If you're planning to make several meals with something (like deli meat), choosing a re-sealable package can help keep it fresh, so the lunch sandwich on Friday is as good as the one you make on Monday.



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BE AN AMBASSADOR

Compost your organic waste and take the time to read your local guidelines on what materials can be accepted in your area because composting programs vary widely by location. Also, make sure to share this information with your office and community.

KNOW WHAT YOU CAN RECYCLE

Recycling programs vary by location, so be sure to check your local government's website to find a list of materials that are accepted. There may be information on additional collection programs available to you as well. Help others by posting signs at work and around your community to share this important information.



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REUSE TO REDUCE

Bring reusable bags to shop and reduce the use of plastic bags. And when you can, carry a reusable water bottle to re-fill on the go. **Click here to find water fill stations in your area.**

LOOK AT LABELS

When shopping, look for items that are packaged in materials that are compatible with your local recycling program, or that are made from responsibly sourced materials which have identifiable certification logos like FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and RSB (Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials).



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LABEL IT

Put up posters in your office, home, and community about what is recyclable, compostable, and what goes in the trash.



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IN MEETINGS

Whenever possible, reuse leftover notepads by discarding used sheets. Ensure reusable mugs and glasses are available for meeting attendees.

DONATE

Find a local charity or school for your unused or unwanted items, such as textiles and furniture.



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IN THE KITCHEN

Provide filtered water dispensers if possible or explore the possibility of installing a water purification system so your office can avoid using bottled water. Also, stock your office with reusable plates, bowls, silverware, mugs, and glasses rather than paper or plastic.



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DID YOU KNOW?

- We need 1.6 Earths to support the way we are currently living, as a global average. In the US, the per capita footprint is as much as six times larger than the Earth's capacity.
- 11 million metric tons of plastic enter the ocean every year.
- It takes 95% less energy to recycle aluminum (cans, foil, and tins) and use it again than to extract brand new aluminum. And yet, we only recycle aluminum cans 67% of the time in the US.
- The US has a 9% plastics recycling rate, which ranks well below Europe (30%) and China (25%).
- In the US, packaging materials account for 13% of the waste that ends up in landfills.
- Paper and cardboard made from tree-based fiber account for the biggest share of packaging waste in the US. They're also the most recycled packaging materials. Of the 38 million tons generated in 2012, 29 million tons (76%) were recycled.
- According to the EPA, an average of 4.9 pounds of waste was generated daily per person in the US in 2018.

What WWF Is Doing To Help

WWF envisions a world with *No Plastic in Nature by 2030*. To reach this goal, WWF is uniting our global networks of industry leaders, consumers, and policymakers to transform our systems, so the plastics we discard become plastics we use again. As part of this effort, WWF is partnering with businesses across the planet to redesign how we source, use, and dispose of plastics.

Through our *Resource: Plastic* activation hub, we're helping some of the world's leading companies make meaningful, measurable progress to reduce plastic waste – both across their business operations, and well beyond. As a first-of-its-kind effort to measure corporate action on plastic waste, ReSource helps companies leverage data to identify ways to maximize the impact of their waste mitigation activities. And because nothing multiplies impact like collaboration, ReSource also connects companies, stakeholders, and governments to scale interventions together for systemic change.

[Learn more here.](#)

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ReSource is designed to identify the concrete changes that will make the biggest impacts in reducing a company's plastic pollution footprint. To get closer to our goal of No Plastic in Nature will take nothing short of transforming the entire value chain. With ReSource, companies now have access to more advanced tools to maximize and measure their commitments to make this a reality.

Nik Sekhran—
Chief Conservation Officer
World Wildlife Fund (WWF)



© Adriano Gambarini / WWF-Brazil

In addition to plastic reduction and recycling, sustainable sourcing is key part of WWF's multi-faceted approach to No Plastic in Nature. Today, 99% of new plastic is made from fossil fuels, which means from the moment they're made, these conventional plastics contribute to climate change and polluting our planet long before they become trash. While we still require some new plastic to meet our most critical health and safety needs, we don't need to make this plastic from fossil fuels. Instead, this plastic can be plant-based - if it's made responsibly. The **Bioplastic Feedstock Alliance (BFA)**, led by WWF, is working alongside leading consumer brands to ensure that plant-based plastic is sustainably designed, produced, and recycled.

[Click here to learn more.](#)



OTHER WAYS TO HELP

Engage your Community

Your local shops care about your opinion and your shopping or dining experience. Ask restaurants that use disposable containers to have recycling and composting in store. Also ask them to go plastic-free for takeaway and encourage their guests to bring their own containers instead.

Start a Collection

Ask shops in your area if they will participate in a plastic bag recycling collection program.

Swap It

Organize a clothing or household goods swap at work, using a breakroom to “shop” your coworkers’ wares. Once a season, plan a day where everyone brings in their unwanted items for others to take, and donate any leftover items to charity.

Get Creative

Find fun and new ways to reuse materials and give them another life.

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