

Christine's Tips for Reducing Daily Plastic Use

Reducing plastic on a daily basis is easy if you take it one step at a time. One of the fastest ways to reduce your plastic use is to eliminate single-use plastics from your normal habits.

One: Stop using plastic straws

Ask for "no straw" when dining out or select the option "no straws and cutlery" available in take-out or delivery apps. This act, while seemingly small, makes a huge difference. I've seen the effects of straws in the environment first-hand. If you have sensitive teeth, bring your own reusable straw or ask your server if they use paper-based, plastic-free straws such as Footprint's straws, which also support sea turtle conservation efforts.

Two: Be prepared when being on the road

1. Bring your own reusable water bottle to refill while moving about. Refill stations are becoming more and more common.
2. If you need your frequent fix of coffee, make sure to have a reusable mug you can use in coffee shops. It might even save you a few cents.
3. Bring your own reusable cutlery (bamboo or wood are best when flying) that you can use instead of plastic cutlery that many restaurants offer.

Three: Shop differently at the grocery store

There are many opportunities to bring home less plastic from the grocery store:

1. Don't use single-use produce bags. Instead, use mesh bags or avoid using a bag entirely for foods that don't need to be contained.
2. If your store doesn't sell prepared produce in plastic-free containers such as cardboard and glass. Purchase as many whole fruits and vegetables as you can to avoid buying pre-sliced items sold in plastic containers.
3. Buy staples like cereal, nuts, pasta and rice from the bulk aisle and fill up a reusable bag or container.
4. Bring your own container for meat and deli foods. This is an easy way to get the best cuts without the plastic-lined butcher paper or plastic containers.
5. Buy fresh bread that comes in a paper bag, or no bag. Many bakers recommend using paper or cloth bags to carry and store fresh loaves to allow airflow, so there's really no benefit to the plastic bag. I love this excuse to get to know the bakeries around my neighborhood.

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Four: Carry-out with your own container

- If you don't finish a meal, bring your own doggy-bag to avoid the standard plastic or Styrofoam™ single-use container.
- When ordering take-out, arrive at the restaurant and provide your own clean container. Don't forget to leave the plastic cutlery at the restaurant and don't use it at home — both your family and your guests will thank you.
- When using a delivery service make sure to support restaurants that offer plastic-free containers and use apps that have the option to “opt out” of straws, cutlery, and condiment packages.

Five: Light a match

Use matches instead of disposable plastic lighters, or invest in a refillable metal lighter.

Six: Reduce plastic from your beauty routine

This is easier than you think! I make my own cosmetics in reusable tins, but here are a few ways to take a fresh look at your makeup or shave bag:

1. Brush your teeth with plastic free toothpaste. This often comes in tablet form and is really easy to use! Don't forget to use a bamboo or metal toothbrush.
2. Use bar shampoo and conditioner. There are many choices available online and in the grocery aisle, including options for color treated hair.
3. Shave with a metal razor and replaceable blades.
4. Buy face masks in glass jars or make your own using clay powder.
5. Until you're ready to make your own cosmetics, look for options that come in plastic-free packaging.

If you would like to dive deeper into ideas how to live with less plastic or plastic-free, check out these amazing guides:

“I Quit Plastics: And You Can Too”

by Kate Nelson (ISBN 978-1925700602)

<http://lost-theplot.com/book/i-quit-plastics/>

“Plastic-Free: How I Kicked the Plastic Habit and How You Can Too”

by Beth Terry (ISBN 978-1632206657)

<https://www.skyhorsepublishing.com/9781616086244/plastic-free/>

“Healthy Pregnancy Guide”

by Sydney Cook

<https://www.madesafe.org/pregnancyguide/>

“Plastic Free: The Inspiring Story of a Global Environmental Movement and Why It Matters”

by Rebecca Prince-Ruiz and Joanna Atherfold Finn (ISBN 978-0231198622)

<https://cup.columbia.edu/book/plastic-free/9780231198622>