

6 Simple Tips to Reduce Waste So Every Day Is Earth Day



[Earth Day](#) 2018 is focused on the all-important theme of reducing [plastic](#) litter and pollution. Of course, we shouldn't just reduce our plastic footprint, we should try to reduce waste in all shapes, sizes and [forms](#). It's said that the average American generates a staggering [4 pounds](#) of trash every day—but you don't have to be part of that statistic.

Here are six entirely manageable tips and tricks to help you cut waste.

1. BYO (Bring Your Own)

We all know we should bring our own bag to the grocery store, but what about bringing your own straw or takeaway container to restaurants? I now make it a habit of toting a "Zero-Waste Kit" with me everywhere so I don't make trash when I'm on the go. As you can see below, it contains essentials like



canvas bags, utensils, beverage holders and cloth napkins. Reusable items are staples for a trash-free lifestyle.

From left to right. Large canvas bag; a 'tall' size mason jar with sipping lid; water bottle; cloth napkin; glass container with lid; utensils; metal straw; smaller canvas bags for loose items and/or produce.

2. The "Three Rs" of the environment isn't just a rule, it's a tier

The hierarchy of the eco-refrain "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" is key. For instance, switching to a reusable water bottle will help you stop buying [single-use plastic ones](#). Almost all drink bottles are made from virgin, petroleum-based plastic, not recycled material. The vast majority end up in landfills, [oceans](#) or other bodies of water, where they never actually degrade, but break down into tinier and [tinier pieces](#), potentially causing harm to the natural environment and wildlife.

However, recycling that disposable bottle isn't the best answer either. Recycling itself is an energy-intensive process and has emissions associated with it, too. And, in case you haven't heard, [China is no longer accepting](#) the world's recyclables, leaving recycling centers with [ever-growing mountains of trash](#). Simply, we have to find ways to buy less and use less.

I'd like to add two more Rs to the list:

- **Refuse.** This R is probably more crucial than "Reduce." For instance, you don't need that paper or plastic bag at check-out; tell your servers "no straw"; refuse to buy things that come in wasteful packaging.
- **Repair.** When your clothing gets a tear or your electronics aren't working, try fixing it instead of buying new. As the saying goes, if it ain't broke...

3. DIY

If I had to recommend one "must-have" tool for the home, it would be a high-speed blender. I use it to whip up smoothies, nut milks, soups, sauces, dips and flours. Sure, homemade food is often healthier and cheaper, but it also means I don't have to buy these individual items from the store, cutting down on unnecessary packaging.

Many everyday products and cosmetics can be made at home. Check out prominent zero-waste influencer Lauren Singer's ["Trash is For Tossers"](#) blog and [YouTube channel](#). Singer—who can remarkably fit four years of trash into a single mason jar—teaches you how to make your own toothpaste, lotion, deodorant and more. (Actually, follow some of these other amazing zero-wasters such as [Anne-Marie Bonneau](#), [Celia Ristow](#) and [Jonathan Levy](#), who give great ideas and advice on litter-free living.)

Is there something you consume a lot of that you can make at home instead? I love kombucha, so instead of paying \$4 a bottle at the store, I make my own. I also grow simple foods such as leafy greens and herbs. I know, I know, you don't always have the time or effort to DIY. But if anything, it's a big money saver.



Some easy-to-grow greens and herbs, homemade kombucha in the back.

4. Look for multipurpose, long-lasting, giant-sized items

Buy in bulk for things you always need, such as non-perishable foods, laundry detergent, olive oil, toilet paper, etc. Also, the best products have multiple uses, like castile soap. Just a few drops can go a long way in making soap, shampoo, all-purpose cleaner and even fruit wash. I like to buy the biggest version, which lasts for months. And check out this awesome list for [30+ uses for apple cider vinegar](#).

5. Think local

Is there a farmers market near you? Or a CSA program you can join? Not only are you supporting community farmers, the food travels fewer miles and often comes without, or in much less, packaging. For instance, the onions and potatoes from my weekly CSA box never come in the unnecessary netting you often find at the supermarket.

6. Catalogue your waste footprint

The most important step, really, is to take an honest look at what you throw away. Have you been tossing out a lot of food lately? Try making stock from veggie scraps or start a compost. Does your car guzzle a lot of gasoline? Consider taking public transport if it's available, or investing in an [electric bike](#) for shorter distances. Do you go through a lot of clothing? Try second-hand or raid someone else's closet. The point is, there's almost always a more environmentally friendly option.

Keep in mind that cutting your waste might not happen overnight, but it's important to make the effort. The planet will thank you for it.