

Seven Ways to Reduce Plastic Waste at Home

Seven ways to reduce plastic use, the big issue

We've all heard it. Cut out plastics. Plastic is bad. Microplastics are everywhere. The list goes on. The task to reduce plastic waste seems endless and impossible and is made even harder since it has become a key part of the manufacturing process. It can seem impossible to act regarding this growing environmental challenge.

In a 2017 study by Reese & Junge, it was estimated that around 220 million tons of plastic were produced globally during the year. Of this, around 3.5 million tons of plastic were consumed in Australia (O'Farrell, 2018). [Plastics](#) are man-made and take hundreds of years to break down. A great deal of this plastic ends up in the [oceans](#) and eventually in the food chain. According to Novotna, et al., (2019), microplastics have been detected in foods such as seafood, salt and even in drinking water.

Overcoming the challenge

On an individual level, the task seems too large. A study by Reese & Junge (2017) looked at the way tasks are worded. Their research showed that how tasks are worded (low, medium, or high difficulty) can affect how you judge your ability to make a difference. The article by Reese & Junge (2017), discusses how the low difficulty tasks are mostly achieved without much thought, while the medium difficulty tasks are most often completed with intent. Taking part in the medium difficulty tasks also resulted in more positive feelings.



Seven simple steps to reducing plastic use at home

There are many ways you can make simple changes around your own home. These simple to do changes all add up to have a positive effect and help the planet to [**THRIVE**](#);

- **Stop buying bottled water.** Australians buy millions of plastic bottles each year with less than 10% of these recycled (O'Farrell, 2018). Making the switch to a reusable bottle can greatly reduce the amount of plastic waste and save you money.
- **Switch out single-use plastic bags.** Australian states, apart from NSW, have regulated the removal of lightweight single-use plastic bags from grocery store checkouts (Gibbs & Cocker, 2020). Oddly, single-use produce bags are still deemed okay. These are easy to avoid. Many types of washable produce bags are available and are a cheap option.

- **Try [meat-free](#) meals.** According to an article by Palomo-Velez, Tybur & Vugt, (2018), we each eat around 38kgs of meat per year. Raising livestock needs cleared land, use of resources such as water and grain, and creates large amounts of greenhouse gasses. The packaging of meat products also uses a large amount of plastic and polystyrene.
- **Visit farmers markets.** Buying local produce helps in many ways. For one, it helps support local farmers. Plus, you know the produce is farm fresh and in season. In addition, vendors at markets are less likely to cut products and wrap them in plastic. This helps local farmers to [THRIVE](#) and is an easy way to make a sustainable change.

Some more examples.....

- **Visit bulk food stores.** These stores tend to stock local and organic items such as grains, flours, spices, legumes, and other everyday household items. In addition, you'll also find paper bags instead of plastic. There are scales so you only weigh out what you need. Less food waste is always a good thing.
- **Ditch the body wash.** Soap bars are making a come back. So, when looking to reduce plastic, look to your bathroom. Buying a new bottle of body wash or shampoo every few weeks adds a great deal to plastic waste. Also of note, it's worth checking the ingredients for things like palm oil and SLS. These additives contribute to habitat destruction and can have negative impacts on health.
- **Cook from scratch.** Nothing tastes better than fresh home-cooked meals. Using local produce even more so. Buying fresh produce limits the amount of packaged food used. A good rule of thumb is to stay away from the centre aisles at the supermarket as this is where most of the packaged items are located.

Allowing the planet to [THRIVE](#)

Cutting out plastics doesn't have to be hard. If everyone took one or two of the steps listed, there will still be a large decrease in the amount of plastic entering landfills and oceans. In an article by Almroth & Eggert (2019), they discuss the impact of the 10 million tons of plastic which enters the world's oceans each year.

Some of the effects caused by the ingestion of plastics by marine animals are blocked intestines, starvation, and metabolic change (Almroth & Eggert, 2019).

The amount of plastic entering landfill and the oceans is immense. Unfortunately, this plastic isn't going away any time soon. To combat this, we need to take action now to reduce the amount of plastic entering the environment. This will help ensure that our planet is a place where future generations can **THRIVE**.



References

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