

PLASTIC RIVERS

HOW TO REDUCE PLASTIC POLLUTION ON YOUR DOORSTEP

Using less plastic is the biggest thing everyone can do to prevent waste and pollution. Once you've done that, here are the best changes you can make to limit your environmental impact.

1

BOTTLES

The biggest source of plastic pollution in rivers, **6.9%** of plastic bottles are littered a year in the UK.



Use a reusable water bottle every day, and refill with tap water (at home, work or refill stations)

2

FOOD WRAPPERS

300 million crisp packets and **200 million** sweet wrappers end up as litter in the UK every year.

Dispose of food wrappers properly, in a bin



3

CIGARETTE BUTTS

In the UK an estimated **44 billion** cigarettes are smoked each year, with over **14 billion** ending up as litter.



Never throw cigarette butts on the ground – bin them

4

FOOD TAKEAWAY CONTAINERS

5.2 billion food containers are used each year, of which **0.3 billion** end up as litter.

Use reusable food containers when purchasing takeaway food, preferably one you already own



5

COTTON BUD STICKS

1.8 billion plastic-stemmed cotton buds are used in England each year. **10%** are flushed down the toilet.



Use cotton buds with paper sticks

6

CUPS

An estimated **2.5 billion** coffee cups (30,000 tonnes) are used. **99%** are currently not recycled.

Carry a reusable plastic cup every day for takeaway drinks



7

SMOKING-RELATED LITTER

Smoking-related packaging makes up **1.1%** of all litter items found in the freshwater environment.

Never throw smoking-related packaging on the ground – bin it



8

SANITARY PRODUCTS: FEMALE SANITARY PROTECTION, NAPPIES AND WET WIPES

Each day **9.3 million** wet wipes, **700,000** panty liners, **2.5 million** tampons and **1.4 million** sanitary towels are flushed down the toilet.



Never flush wet wipes or sanitary items – put them in the bin

9

PLASTIC STRAWS, STIRRERS AND CUTLERY

4.7 billion straws, **316 million** drinks stirrers and **16.5 billion** single-use cutlery items are used each year. These items are often made from hard-to-recycle plastic.



Use reusable cutlery

PLASTIC BAGS

Single-use plastic carrier bag use has fallen **86%** since the UK introduced the 5p tax in 2014, but the seven major supermarkets still issued over **a billion** bags in 2017.

Carry a reusable bag every day for purchases



10

OTHER WAYS TO MAKE A CHANGE...



PLASTIC BOTTLES

For bathroom and kitchen products – **get refills** from specialist shops – find suppliers at zerowastehome.com. Or switch to solid soap, and shampoo and conditioner bars.

Refill travel-size bottles with your usual products from home

Get milk delivered instead of using plastic milk bottles

Other drinks – buy products in **recycled and recyclable** plastic bottles



FOOD WRAPPERS

Make your own

Buy unwrapped – go to a deli, bakery, cafe or bulk store

To get your sweet fix – **use a reusable tub** for pick 'n' mix or at a traditional sweet shop

Avoid excessive packaging – avoid multipacks and individually wrapped items



CIGARETTE BUTTS

Carry a cigarette butt receptacle to store used butts until you can properly dispose of them

Plastic-free cigarettes – look for a brand that uses plant-derived filters (but still always bin them!)

Spread the word – tell fellow smokers to throw their butts in the bin



FOOD CONTAINERS

Try a **reusable sandwich bag**

Only purchase food in recyclable containers – clean well to avoid contaminating the recycling stream

Avoid black plastic or polystyrene containers – they are not recyclable



COTTON BUD STICKS

Rethink – can you use **plain cotton wool** instead?

If you use a plastic cotton bud – **bin it, don't flush it!**



CUPS

Which reusable is best? Buy one made of durable plastic, and do not buy more than you need

Take it everywhere – to parties, festivals and other events for hot and cold drinks

Reduce your takeaway consumption – make your own coffee rather than buying takeaway, or stop at the café and drink in

Find a coffee cup recycling bin near you – at a coffee chain or your local recycling bank



SANITARY ITEMS

Even if wipes or products are marked as flushable or biodegradable, **bin it!**

Choose 100% organic cotton options for sanitary towels and tampons, if using disposables

Go entirely "plastic free" during your period – see citytosea.org.uk for advice

Use reusable nappies – go to fillyourpants.com for advice



SMOKING-RELATED LITTER

Bin empty lighters

Spread the word – tell fellow smokers to throw all smoking litter in the bin



STRAWS, STIRRERS AND CUTLERY

Refuse stirrers – use a reusable teaspoon instead

Refuse straws – unless needed for medical/ accessibility reasons. Or use paper ones.

For children – when buying them a reusable bottle or cup, get one with a **built-in straw**

Wooden cutlery or stirrers are the best alternative to reusable, and can be composted



PLASTIC BAGS

Refuse pre-packed produce – choose unwrapped fruit, veg and bakery produce and put in a reusable bag or leave loose

If you have plastic bags – **reuse them** until they break! Then recycle.

Carrier bag recycling – some supermarkets and other outlet offer this. Take your bags there once they reach the end of their life.

Tell us how you're pledging to reduce your plastic footprint

#PlasticRivers

www.earthwatch.org.uk/plastics



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