

Pine River Library Program in a Bag: Ditch Single Use Plastics!



Why Ditch Single Use Plastics?

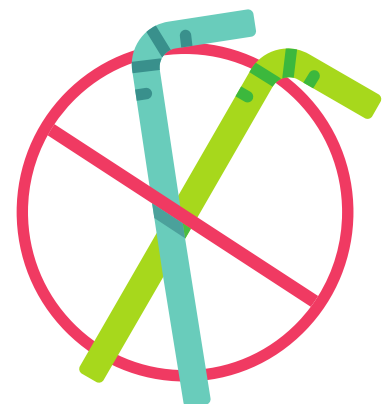
Remember the Three R's? Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. The less single use plastics we use by following the first R and "reducing" our consumption, the less plastic there is in the world!

But What's So Bad About Plastics?

- Plastic never goes away. It doesn't biodegrade; it only breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces. And get this: 33% of all plastic is used once and then discarded. Plastic can't biodegrade, it just breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces.
- Plastic pollutes our groundwater. There are tens of thousands of landfills across the world. The plastics in these landfills create toxic chemicals that are seeping into groundwater and flowing downstream into lakes and rivers.
- Plastic threatens wildlife. Animals get tangled in plastics, ingest plastics, and their habitats can also be damaged by plastics. Sad fact: Plastic debris outweighs zooplankton in our oceans by a ratio of 36-to-1.
- Plastic piles up in the environment. Americans discard more than 30 million tons of plastic a year, and only 9 percent of it gets recycled. That means most of the rest of that amount ends up in landfills or becomes litter.
- Plastic poisons our food chain. Even plankton, the smallest creatures in our oceans, are eating tiny pieces of plastic (microplastics) and absorbing their toxins. When one animal eats another, these toxins are spread up the food chain, starting with the smallest creatures like plankton.
- Plastic affects human health. Nearly all of us have chemicals leached from plastics in our blood and tissues. Plastic exposure is linked to cancers, birth defects, impaired immunity, endocrine disruption, and a host of other ailments.

So What Can I Do?

- Bring your own bag: Always bring your own bags whenever you shop, not just for the grocery store. By bringing your own bag, you alone can save between 400 and 600 plastic bags per year!



- Waterbottles: Bring a stainless steel water bottle rather than drinking water out of disposable plastic bottles. Choose stainless steel or glass over aluminum or plastic.
- Swap out your straws: Say no thanks to the plastic straw at a restaurant. Bring your own, now that you have one from this kit!
- To-go cups: Bring your own stainless steel or ceramic mugs to coffee shops etc. Like milk cartons, to go-cups often have a plastic lining, so in effect they are plastic, and those plastic lids are a major contributor to plastic pollution.
- Bring your own container: Whether you prepare school lunches for kids, order takeout, or go out to eat, take along your own reusable containers for sandwiches, snacks, and leftovers.
- To-go utensils: Try to always bring along your own lightweight bamboo utensil set. They're much sturdier, cleaner, and better for you than plastic knives and forks! Add a stainless steel straw, and you're all set!
- Say no to plastic wrap: There are many excellent substitutes to the ubiquitous stretch plastic wrap. Check out beeswax paper! It conforms to bowls and containers, keeps sandwiches fresh, and is washable and reusable. Beeswax wrap is sold at most natural food stores.
- Buy in bulk: Did you know you can take your own containers to the store, have them weighed, and then fill them with bulk foods? Locally, Durango Natural Foods Co-op and Nature's Oasis both have great bulk foods selections, with everything from spices to grains/legumes/nuts to condiments! The We Fill Store in Durango is another great option for body care and cleaning products; they also sell other handy reusable materials that can help you live a life with less plastic!
- Buy a set of cloth or mesh produce bags: This is a simple swap! Just keep your reusable produce bags in your reusable shopping bags and dry them out after each use if wet or run them through the washing machine when they get too dirty! You can find good deals online for sets with drawstring cords that come in a variety of sizes for all your produce needs!
- Use less Ziplocks: Try replacing your usual plastic sandwich or snack bag with a paper or wax paper (included in this kit) bag. Or if you want to invest in something reusable, try buying a set of silicone bags- they come in all sorts of sizes!
- Wash Ziplocks: It may take a bit of effort to get into the habit, but once you get used to washing your bags after each use, you'll realize that you can have the same set of plastic ziplocks for years! Just wash with soap and warm (not too hot) water and dry with the mouth of the bag open on top of a wooden spoon/utensil or container in the dish drying rack. You can also buy or build a simple ziplock bag dryer (just Google "Ziplock Bag Dryer" and a wealth of results will come up!).

Resources:

- www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/get-started-living-plastic-free
- www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/the-facts
- www.myplasticfreelife.com/plasticfreeguide

Shop:

- www.zerowastestore.com
- www.wildminimalist.com
- www.packagefreeshop.com
- Durango Natural Foods Co-op
- Nature's Oasis
- Natural Grocers
- We Fill Store