



What is Zero-Waste?

“Zero-Waste” is a way of living that aims to make as little trash as possible by recycling, reusing, composting, and most importantly: refusing—as much as possible. And it’s easy to say no to garbage! It starts by making more sustainable choices...

Waste Prevention -- stopping waste before it ever enters our life in the first place-- is the most effective way to prevent pollution and conserve natural resources.

Here are 20 easy tips to get you started on a path to Zero Waste...

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Tweet us how you
 #SayNoToGarbage
 @ScnctdyRecycles

More Resources available at
ccschenectady.org/recycling

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Questions?

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20 Easy Ways You Can Start Saying NO to Garbage

A Zero-Waste Guide for Families

Start Small. Think Big.

1. **Join a community materials exchange.** There are apps and groups on social media that help you share old, unwanted items for free. Or start a group of your own by asking your Facebook friends to share their unwanted items.
2. **Choose to use cloth grocery bags.** 160,000 plastic bags are used globally every second. It takes 500 years for a plastic bag to break down in the environment. (theworldcounts.com)
3. **Recycle household film plastics.** Grocery stores accept plastic bags and other film plastics for recycling (bread bags, cereal bags, frozen food bags, shrink wrap plastic etc. can be recycled if brought to a grocery store).
4. **Choose to use a refillable water bottle.** The average American uses over 140 disposable water bottles per year and only recycles less than 50 of them. (banthebottle.net)
5. **Make purchases with future waste in mind.** 31% of what's in the average household garbage can is packaging. Avoid excess packaging, or choose products that come in recyclable packing whenever possible. (center.sustainability.duke.edu)
6. **Use a reusable To-Go coffee mug.** If you buy one disposable To-Go cup every day, it adds up to 23 pounds of garbage per year. The Average American office worker uses 500 disposable cups of coffee every year. (carryyourcup.org)
7. **Pack waste-free, plastic-free lunches.** The lunch box is a source of unnecessary waste. Try using cloth napkins, real silverware, and reusable plastic-free containers for the lunch box.
8. **Compost food scraps and other biomass.** Food scraps make up about 15% of the waste stream and food causes the greenhouse gas methane in landfills. Combined with yard waste and some paper products, nearly 50% of the waste stream could be diverted and composted. It's easy to compost! Ask us how! (epa.gov)
9. **Choose to use cloth options instead of disposable paper products.** If every U.S. household used just one less 70 sheet roll of paper towels, it would save 544,000 trees each year. If every U.S. household used 3 less rolls per year, it would prevent 120,000 tons of garbage. Re-use old towels and rags for house cleaning. (thepaperlessproject.com)
10. **Ask your family to stop gift-wrapping on birthdays & holidays.** Even though most wrapping paper is recyclable, the majority of it isn't getting recycled. Gift bags are more sustainable because they can be re-used. There are also cloth options for wrapping gifts that can then be re-used. "Ask Google" for examples.
11. **Recycle textiles.** 1.4 billion pounds of recoverable fabric and textiles are being thrown away every year in New York. You can recycle old towels, linens, throw rugs, purses, and blankets at any clothing and shoe drop off bin. Fabrics can be stained, ripped, missing buttons, etc. Always donate regardless of condition. It gets recycled! (nysar3.org)
12. **Save glass jars.** Re-using clean glass jars (from salsa, spaghetti sauce, etc.) is great for storage and replacing plastic storage.
13. **Learn a few recipes for homemade *eco-friendly* cleaners.** It is easy and inexpensive to make effective anti-bacterial household cleaners from products so safe you could eat them! "Ask Google!" for examples. Making green cleaners reduces your household hazardous waste.
14. **Buy in bulk.** Purchasing foods and other goods in bulk quantities not only saves money on the unit-pricing, but it also reduces packaging waste. Some stores offer bulk purchasing for rice, cereal, nuts, etc. Avoid purchasing individually wrapped items!
15. **Fix it!** Before trashing something that's broken, try to repair it. There are internet video tutorials for everything now-a-days!
16. **Make donations.** One man's trash is another man's treasure. Habitat for Humanity picks up large furniture, Cabinets, doors, windows, building Materials toilets, sinks, etc. for free! The Home Furnishing Program accepts home goods, furniture, and similar donations. Local church groups are another great resource for giving a second life to another family in need.
17. **Close the loop.** Buy products made from recycled content—especially trash bags!
18. **Be a green party host.** When hosting big parties, use real silverware, plates, glasses, etc. Make finger foods or snacks that do not create garbage. Avoid decorations that are disposable (balloons, confetti, table décor). Make communal family style choice for beverages. Inform your guests of your recycling and composting practices.
19. **Lead by example.** Share your success. Encourage your friends and coworkers to Re-Use and Recycle.
20. **Pick up litter and remove recyclables from trash bins in public spaces.**

Find more waste reduction ideas by reading "Rethinking Our Waste" the Schenectady County Recycles monthly e-magazine, published online at CCEschenectady.org/recycling

