

**THE BIG
PLASTIC
COUNT**

REFILL REUSE REDUCE

HOW TO UNWRAP A PACKAGING REVOLUTION

HANDBOOK



Welcome

Thank you for downloading this guide. You're one step closer to taking vital action that will help us reduce plastic pollution. If you took part in The Big Plastic Count this year, thank you twice over. Your evidence is laying the groundwork for meaningful change. This guide will show you how to make that change go even further.

IT'S TIME TO STOP EXCESS PLASTIC AT THE SOURCE

Before we dive in, let's make something clear. When talking about single-use plastic, it's easy to feel like you aren't doing enough. You might take a reusable bag to the shop or opt for plastic-free fruit and veg, but despite your best efforts, the plastics crisis prevails.

That's because it's the responsibility of governments and corporations to stop excess plastic at the source.

Whilst regular people can switch up their shopping habits, it's policy-makers who need to invest in refill systems and enforce limits on plastic production.

That's why we're focusing our efforts on influencing the **UN Global Plastics Treaty** – an international legal agreement to prevent the harmful impacts of plastic. This is a once-in-a-

generation chance to solve plastic pollution. If politicians, supermarkets and brands push for ambitious legislation, we can end the age of plastic.

But we can't do that without you. See, your power lies in the choices you make and the institutions you persuade. By taking steps to reduce your own plastic footprint and switch to refill, you're showing leaders that there's a demand for alternatives to single-use plastic.

And the more demand there is, the more pressure there is on them to act.

We've included a range of ways to reduce your impact at home whilst pushing governments and corporations to change course. With your help, we'll revolutionise refill and improve the lives of all those who call our blue planet home.

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**STRONG
GLOBAL
PLASTICS
TREATY
NOW**

A note on accessibility

It's important to recognise that, when it comes to the wellbeing of Disabled People, single-use plastic can be crucial. Take plastic straws for example – for some, flexibility is a key function of straws that many reusable alternatives don't have. What's more, the vast majority of medicine comes in single-use plastic.

On top of that, some people don't have the financial means to switch to reusable alternatives right now (despite the long-term cost effectiveness of refillable containers). That's why accessibility and affordability must be central to any solution to the plastic problem – further emphasising the role of governments and corporations to create inclusive policies that consider the needs of everyone.

As such, if there are any tips in this guide that don't work for you, simply skip them. And if you're looking for ways to tackle the plastics crisis without changing the way you shop, just check out the five options below.

ACTIONS FOR ALL

Whilst switching up your shopping habits is a powerful way to influence change, one of the most effective methods is to connect with other people.

Whether you want to get active in your local community, write to your MP or go online, here are five things that anyone can do to make a difference:

- **Write to your local MP.** Your MP represents you and can push for a strong UN Global Plastics Treaty. [Search for their details using this tool](#) and urge them to act.
- **Connect with like-minded people.** [Join your nearest Greenpeace Local Group](#) or search for [community refill schemes in your area](#).
- **Take part in Unwrapped.** We're hosting a range of events after The Big Plastic Count to put our findings into action. [Join in or organise your own event here](#).
- **Sign the petition.** By building pressure on change-makers, you can influence decisive action. [Join the call for a strong UN Global Plastics Treaty](#).
- **Get active online.** Follow [@GreenpeaceUK](#) and [@EverydayPlastic](#) for campaign updates. Whilst you're there, tell your followers why you care about plastic pollution and how they can get involved.



BRING THE REFILL REVOLUTION HOME

To end the age of plastic, we need a refill revolution. That means that politicians, brands and supermarkets need to stop enabling a throw-away culture and introduce refill systems that work for everyone.

Whenever you make an eco-conscious choice, you're sending a message to change-makers that people want these systems at scale. But where to begin?

Here are three simple yet impactful ways to reduce your plastic footprint in the kitchen, in the bathroom and on-the-go. With each change you make, you'll wield your power as a shopper and help us kick-start the refill revolution.

Did you know? [A recent study](#) by Zero Waste Europe found that reusable packaging is cheaper for consumers in the long run, with reusable takeaway food containers and coffee cups the most cost effective. Meanwhile, it's predicted that the cost of single-use plastic packaging will increase.

In the kitchen

If you took part in The Big Plastic Count, you'll be well aware that the kitchen is a single-use plastic hotspot. UK shoppers are now throwing away a shocking two billion pieces of plastic a week – most of which comes from food and drink packaging. You can urge supermarkets to champion reusables by making these three quick swaps.

- **Choose unwrapped fruit and veg.** When you're in the fresh produce aisle, look out for loose fruit and veg instead of plastic-wrapped items – most of which are the same prices as their packaged counterparts. If you have the means, you can order a veg box from a local farm. Find your nearest organic box scheme using the [Soil Association search tool](#), and enjoy seasonal, low carbon produce whilst supporting your local growers.
- **Stock up on zero-waste staples.** You've probably noticed that zero-waste shops are popping up all over the place. Find your closest one [here](#) and start buying staples like rice, pasta and pulses in refillable containers.
- **Reuse what you have.** Use old jars to store food, pop a plate over your bowl of leftovers rather than cling-film, and cut up old clothes to use as dishcloths.



In the bathroom

Bathrooms are host to a plethora of plastic products. But it doesn't have to be that way. These days, there are so many alternatives that offer the same quality you expect from your cosmetics, without compromising the health of people or the planet.

- **Swap bottles for bars.** The average household uses a whopping [216 plastic hair care bottles every year](#), yet cosmetic bars are more readily available than ever. Swap liquid shampoo, conditioner, hand wash and shower gel for a plastic-free bar next time you're in the supermarket.
- **Refill and reuse.** If bars aren't for you, lots of places offer refill schemes for products like shampoo and conditioner. You can also buy reusable nappies, makeup pads and period products that can be washed and reused again and again – saving you money over time.
- **Choose an eco alternative.** Most supermarkets now sell recycled loo roll, bamboo toothbrushes and eco bathroom cleaning products. You can even make your own cleaning products at home for a fraction of the cost. [Check out our ultimate guide to natural and reduced waste cleaning.](#)

Did you know? 6% of marine plastic ends up in the ocean via the loo. Remember to only flush the three Ps – pee, poo and paper – to avoid your toilet becoming a funnel for ocean pollution.



On-the-go

Cutting back on single-use plastic at home is a great place to start, but there are plenty of things you can do when you're out and about, too. On-the-go products are rife with single-use plastic, but making simple swaps can drastically cut your plastic footprint and your outgoings.

- **Pack a reuse kit.** Lots of people have already made the switch to reusable water bottles, coffee cups and shopping bags. These three items can save heaps of single-use plastic and work out cheaper in the long run. After all, why pay for bottled water when it comes out of the tap?
- **Bring a packed lunch.** This is an easy way to reduce plastic and save money when eating on-the-go. Use old takeaway boxes, empty glass jars or used food tubs to store your leftovers or homemade sandwich.
- **Download the Refill app for free.** The Refill app connects you to a global network of places to reduce, reuse and refill. Wherever you are, you can find places to refill your reusable coffee cup, get free drinking water, fill your lunchbox or find zero waste shopping options nearby.



Did you know? In the UK, 2.5 billion coffee cups are thrown away every year. That's enough to stretch around the world roughly five and a half times, yet **just 0.25% are recycled**. What's more, in the UK, our 'lunch on the go' habit generates 11 billion items of packaging waste a year, amounting to **276 items per person**.



If you've read this far, thank you! Every individual action makes a huge difference. Together, we'll show governments and big businesses that we want a strong UN Global Plastics Treaty. For more tips and zero-waste hacks, check out the [Plastic Free Living Hub](#).