

# BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO LIVING WITH LESS PLASTIC

## 9 TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED



Lindsay Miles | [treadingmyownpath.com](http://treadingmyownpath.com)

Plastic is everywhere: we use it, and we don't really think about it. Yet so much can be avoided. The question for beginners is this: where do I start? I want to help you take those first steps without tearing your hair out, going round in circles or feeling overwhelmed. In this "Beginners Guide to Living with Less Plastic" I'm going to take you through 9 simple and straightforward swaps that you can make to reduce your plastic-use.

Beginning the plastic-free journey? You've totally got this. I'm Lindsay Miles: a speaker, writer, blogger and workshop facilitator teaching others how to live better with less waste. My journey began in 2012 when I came across a challenge to give up plastic for a month. I thought it would be easy - little did I realise how much plastic was in my life! When I discovered all the problems that plastic is causing, I was determined to do something about it. And when I realised most plastic can be avoided - well, there was no looking back!

This guide introduces some of the plastic-free living ideas I share on my website [treadingmyownpath.com](http://treadingmyownpath.com). I hope it stirs your curiosity and sparks your determination. There's plenty more tips and ideas where these came from, but please know - there is no rush! Feel free to go at your own pace. If you get stuck, my inbox is always open, so email me anytime.

Thanks so much for stopping by, and good luck!



Lindsay x



## BRING REUSABLE BAGS

When it comes to reusable bags, it isn't so much about "choosing" as "using". It's about *remembering* to bring them with us, because let's face it... we all have reusable bags. They are most effective when we actually take them with us!

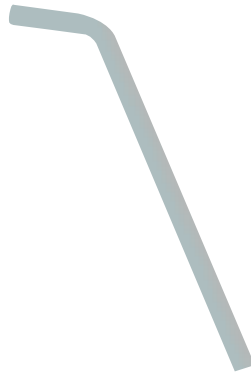
Yet we've all had that experience where we've got to the checkout, and realised our reusable bags have been left in the car, or in the kitchen drawer, or hanging on the peg by the door at home.

Remembering to bring a reusable bag is a habit we can train ourselves to do. In the beginning, we need reminding. Place reusables in places where you'll notice them as you leave the house. Place them in strategic locations: where you keep your purse, in the car, in the bicycle basket. Pop a reminder on the back of the front door.

We wouldn't leave the house without our shoes or our keys, and we don't really need to think about it. It's automatic. The good news is, reusables are like this too. With enough practice, remembering them becomes second nature.

**TIP:**

*The most sustainable option is always using what we already have. If you need to replace old bags with new ones, this [reusable shopping bag guide](#) may be useful.*



## SKIP THE STRAW

Plastic straws might seem small but their environmental impact is huge: they are one of the top 10 items found in beach clean-ups and litter pick-ups. The good news is, avoiding straws does not require remembering any specialist equipment. It's as simple as saying "no straw, please" when placing an order.

If you'd really rather use a straw, switch to your own reusable steel, glass or bamboo options. Cleaning brushes are readily available too. Reusable straws provide a great talking point with waitstaff, and are a gateway into starting the conversation about the wider issues of single-use plastic.

When abroad and faced with a language barrier, showing that we have a reusable straw can be more effective than trying to explain that we'd rather not have a plastic straw.

When it comes to skipping single-use plastic straws, the trick isn't actually remembering to bring our own straw. The trick is remembering to request no straw! Like all habits, it gets easier with time and the more we do it.

**TIP:**

*Find out more about different reusable options, the plastic-free single use alternatives and plastic straw reduction campaigns [here](#).*



## CARRY A REUSABLE WATER BOTTLE

Generally, we end up purchasing and using single-use plastic items when we're caught out, or unprepared. Having a reusable water bottle stops us from buying water when we're on the go. Plastic water bottles are another of the top 10 items found in beach clean-ups. If a full bottle of water seems a little heavy to be carrying around all day, and you're somewhere with good access to clean water, only fill it  $\frac{1}{4}$  full. Top up from a public water fountain or friendly café when you need a drink.

If you're lucky enough to live somewhere with clean drinking water coming out of the tap, make the most of it. Prefer your water filtered? Consider getting a filter attached to your tap. Alternatively, invest in a water bottle with a built-in filter or pop a charcoal binchotan stick into your regular water bottle.

If water's not your drink of choice, fill your bottle up with whatever is your drink of choice.



## BRING YOUR OWN CUP

Many people don't realise that takeaway coffee cups are lined with a thin layer of plastic. That's what makes them water-tight. It also makes them very difficult to recycle. Yes, takeaway coffee cups also feature in the top 10 of litter pick-ups.

Reusable cups are a solution. Many cafes offer a discount for bringing a reusable cup, so they soon pay for themselves. Even without a discount, the environment is winning.

Reusable coffee cups are so much more versatile than simply filling with takeaway coffee. They are a water glass if you need a drink from a fountain; they are an impromptu container when buying treats from the bakery or when needing to transport leftovers.

There are different types, so consider your needs. Does it need to be lightweight? A particular size? Leak proof? Insulated? Collapsible? The best reusable coffee cup is the one you will use most often.

**TIP:**

*If you'd like to invest in a reusable cup that suits your needs, this [guide to reusable coffee cups](#) might help give you some ideas.*



## USE REUSABLE PRODUCE BAGS

Produce bags are those super-thin plastic bags that we use to buy fruit and vegetables or other loose items. Like all single-use items, there is an alternative.

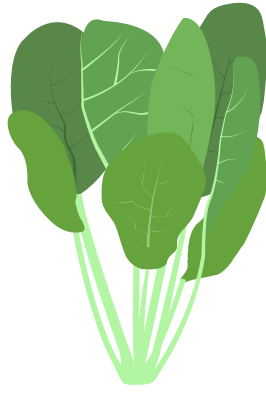
If reusable shopping bags are the first step to reducing plastic bag use, then reusable produce bags are the next step.

As always, there are plenty of options. If you can sew, or know someone who can, they are very straightforward to DIY. If that's not you, there are plenty of options available to purchase.

Mesh reusable produce bags are lightweight and also see-through, meaning customer service assistants can see what's in the bag. Some suppliers sell mesh bags made from recycled (PET) plastic. Alternatively, others sell bags crafted from netting or old net curtains. Mesh produce bags are not suitable for flours or powders.

Cotton or other fabric reusable bags are also an option and can be used for fine ingredients. They do tend to be heavier, and are not transparent.

Depending on your needs, a mix of both can be beneficial.



## EAT MORE PLANTS

When it comes to reducing single-use packaging, one of the easiest things to find without plastic is fresh produce. Yes, fruit and vegetables. Not all produce is available plastic-free in every location, but there are plenty of options. Often that's because nature has its own packaging (think banana skins, orange peel).

The most overpackaged food tends to be the most processed food. The more natural the ingredients, the less packaging.

Next time you're doing the grocery shop, have a look around the fruit and vegetable section. See what you can find that's packaging free. It's pretty likely you'll find things you've never cooked before, maybe never tasted before. Challenge yourself to try something new.

All vegetables can be cooked more than one way. Baked, roasted, boiled, poached, simmered, steamed, stewed, sautéed, fried, deep-fried... Don't write something off just because you had it once and didn't like it. Experiment!





# UPGRADE YOUR TOOTHBRUSH

We all brush our teeth, and we tend to change our toothbrush every few months. We replace them because the bristles wear out, yet the handle is often perfectly fine. But the whole thing needs to be replaced and tends to end up in the bin.

Whilst not one of the top 10 items found in beach clean-ups, it is surprising how many toothbrushes actually end up on the beach. Nobody is brushing their teeth on the beach!

One alternative is to switch to a bamboo toothbrush. These toothbrushes have a bamboo handle and plastic bristles. (There are options that use boar hair as natural bristles, but these are harder to track down - and not palatable for everyone.)

With bamboo toothbrushes, once the bristles have worn out they can be removed, and the handle can be composted. If they somehow end up in the ocean, the wooden handle will biodegrade naturally.

Another alternative is a toothbrush with a replaceable head. The handle might be plastic but it isn't single-use, because once the bristles wear out, only the head is switched with a new head.

A toothbrush might seem like a small amount of plastic, but it is something we replace often, and over a lifetime, it adds up. If we all change our toothbrushes, collectively that's a huge impact. Plus the switch is simple.



## TRY SOAP BARS

When it comes to plastic packaging, the bathroom is the second biggest culprit after the kitchen. So many products come in plastic. Yet there's a simple switch that can eliminate a lot of the plastic bottles.

Bar soap. Specifically, good quality bar soap that contains vegetable oils, and is free from sodium tallowate (which is an animal by-product and very drying on the skin). As with all things, we get what we pay for.

Bar soap can replace handwash, shower gel, body wash and face wash. There are also solid soap shampoo and conditioner bars for hair, shaving soap bars, body butter bars, and more.

Bar soap is much more concentrated than liquid soap and other washes. Liquid products are mostly water, which means we are paying for and transporting water around the globe. Bar soap has a much lower environmental footprint. Not to mention, it's very easy to find soap unpackaged, or with cardboard outers only.

If liquid soap is more your preference, a simple hack is to grate bar soap, add to boiling water to dissolve and once cooled, refill an old dispenser pump.



## CHOOSE SECOND-HAND

Almost all new things come in packaging, and it tends to be plastic packaging. One simple solution to avoid the plastic packaging is to try to find things second-hand.

Borrowing is a great option if we only need the item on a short-term basis. (Do we really need a drill, or do we just need a hole in the wall?) We can borrow informally from friends, family and neighbours. We can borrow from the library: books, magazines, CDs, DVDs, eBooks, board games and more.

We can hire items such as furniture, dinnerware and glassware, party decorations, cookware and tools.

If we want an item to keep, we can look online at second-hand marketplaces like eBay, Craigslist and Gumtree. We can read the classifieds. We can check out the charity shops and second-hand stores.

Second-hand doesn't have to mean worn out and it definitely isn't second-best. It's giving a new lease of life to something already in existence and reduces pressure on new resources.

# LOOKING FOR A NEXT STEP?

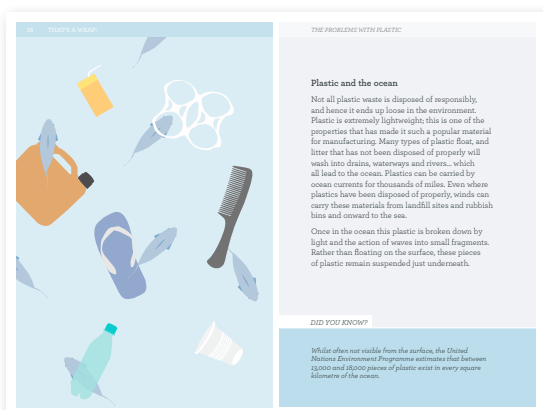
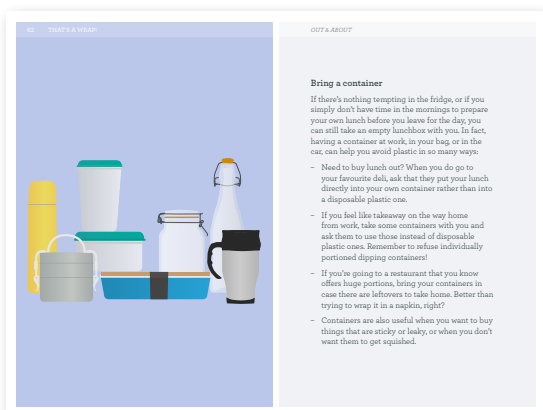
Take the plastic-free living challenge further!



*That's A Wrap* is a professionally illustrated 119-page Guide packed with tips, ideas and inspiration for living plastic-free. It's made up of 8 chapters covering the problems of plastic, food shopping, green cleaning, out and about, the art of change and how we make habits stick, plus much more. Beautifully laid out, *That's a Wrap* is a guide for anyone just starting out on a plastic-free living adventure, as well as those of us who have begun a zero-waste or plastic-free lifestyle and are looking for extra inspiration.

*That's A Wrap* is full of practical tips, ideas and inspiration for living with a lot less (or even just a little less) plastic. It focuses on the positive, is easy to read and stunning to look at.

Plastic-free living was where it all began for me. That decision, made over four years ago, changed so many things about the way I live my life, and all for the better! I'm happier, healthier, more connected to my community – and of course I waste a lot less. If this sounds like the kind of journey that you'd like to be on too (of course it does!) click the buttons below to buy your copy or to find out more:



*"I downloaded your e-book at the weekend, and it's AMAZING! It looks so fab and is packed full of really useful, practical content. I have previously put plastic-free very firmly in my 'too hard' pile, but reading your book has made me reconsider and I'm keen to start implementing some little changes, and beginning my plastic free journey, so thank you!"*

Jen Gale | Blogger, Speaker and Campaigner  
Warminster, UK  
[mymakedoandmendlife.com](http://mymakedoandmendlife.com)

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Thank you so much for stopping by to read this guide. If you loved it please share and help spread the word – I'd be super grateful!

### Share on Social Media



## WATCH MY TEDX TALK

If you're looking for more inspiration, you might enjoy watching my Tedx talk about living with less waste.



## KEEP IN TOUCH

I've love it if we kept in touch! Whether you've got feedback, a question, you'd like to enquire about my writing, public speaking or courses I run, work with me or suggest a collaboration or project, drop me a line on [hello@treadingmyownpath.com](mailto:hello@treadingmyownpath.com) I can't wait to hear from you!

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I really appreciate all your love and support!

*Love from Lindsay x*

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