



LITTERLESS LUNCHBOXES

STUDENT TOOLKIT

Helping students eliminate single-use plastic
lunchbox waste at home and at school

SEA GOOD
YOUTH EDUCATION +
CONSERVATION



CONTENTS

It's time to go litterless! Plastic is threatening our health,[1] polluting our oceans,[2] killing innocent marine life,[3] speeding up climate change,[4] and destroying our planet.[5] But there is hope, and it lies in change from all of us.[6]

As young people, the future of humanity is in our hands.[7] This toolkit is a great starting point for your Litterless journey, teaching you about some of the most effective solutions to combat single-use plastic in school lunchboxes, like bulk buying, packing a litterless lunchbox, being a leader, and encouraging your school to go nude food. Start small, and remember, every action makes a difference![8]



Litterless Solutions

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SOLUTION 1: BULK BUY

Buying and baking foods in bulk is not only a great way to save money and eat healthier but can also hugely reduce your use of plastic packaging![9]

WHY?

Plastic is made of costly, non-renewable resources like natural gas and crude oil,[10] which are then converted into plastic packaging in a process that creates billions of tonnes of greenhouse gases![11] Sadly, most of this packaging is only used once and then thrown away,[12] meaning that all the hard work, energy, and resources that were taken from the planet become wasted too.[13] Fortunately, these issues can be reduced by bulk buying and refusing excess plastic packaging!

WHAT TO DO

Think about the foods that normally fill your lunchboxes and the amount of packaging waste they create. Zero waste researcher, Neha, has found that “products like chips and yoghurt are some of the biggest culprits”[14] but can still be enjoyed guilt-free by buying a huge bag of chips instead of small, individual packets, [15] or a big container of yoghurt instead of little plastic pouches.[16]



Talk to whoever does the shopping in your family and suggest a trip to a bulk store –plastic-free parent, Ewa, reckons “this is the best place to start your bulk buying journey.”[17] Instead of buying everything pre-packaged in plastic,[18] bulk stores allow you to bring your own packaging - anything that can be reused or recycled is perfect![19]



WHAT TO BUY

BULK BUYING STAPLES

Some great lunchbox foods to look for when buying in bulk are dried fruit, nuts (if your school allows!), and yoghurt.

It'd also be great to stock up on some go-to pantry items, like flour, coconut oil and oats to bulk bake lunchbox snacks.[20]

TIP!

Maps like the "Reusable Nation Zero Waste Shopping in Australia Map" can help you find a local bulk store.[21]

BULK STORE SHOPPING LIST

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CHALLENGE: BULK BAKE



Muffins, protein balls and muesli bars can be incredibly hard to find packaging-free,[22] so baking them in bulk is a great solution![23]



TIP!

Bulk bake once a fortnight, filling your freezer with all kinds of yummy, accessible lunchbox snacks.[24] Most things will last over a month in the freezer!

ADDED BENEFITS

Bulk buying can also have remarkable health benefits,[25] as bulk stores often stock nutrition-rich whole foods without the chemicals and preservatives in so many packaged snacks,[26] as well as saving money as you don't have to pay for expensive logos or packaging.[27] Plus, plastic-free parent Mel believes "bulk buying is even more convenient, reducing the number of shopping trips and the day-to-day stress of lunchbox packing."[28]

Save money,[29] improve your health,[30] increase convenience,[31] and help the planet [32] all at once by bulk buying!



SOLUTION 2:

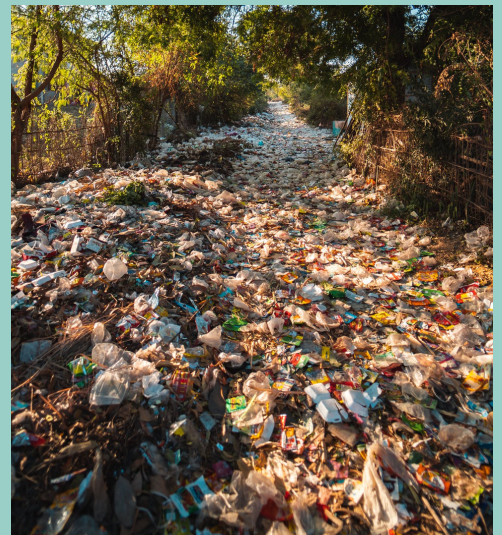
PACK A LITTERLESS LUNCHBOX

Now that you're buying plastic free food and making your own snacks, it's important to learn how to pack a litterless lunchbox.

WHY?

A massive issue is not only the packaging that products are bought with, but also the packaging we add at home.[33] This is the cling wrap covering your sandwich or the plastic snap-lock bags filled with fruit... it's creating a lot of unnecessary waste![34] Soft plastic waste is responsible for killing millions of innocent marine creatures [35] and putting hundreds of species at threat of extinction forever.[36] A report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has found that "by 2050, plastic in the oceans will outweigh fish!"[37]

Plastic waste in Myanmar



As our plastic waste decays in the ocean, it breaks down into harmful substances, releasing chemicals and powerful greenhouse gases, speeding up climate change.[38] We are destroying our oceans; the source of our food, water and over half the oxygen we breathe.[39] As Sir David Attenborough has said, "It is unthinkable to have a world without healthy oceans." [40]

WHAT TO DO

Try collecting up your single-use plastic packaging for a week, and then look around the house for a reusable alternative for each one.[41] Everyone is different, so they'll need different packaging options to cater to their own needs. [42] There's no point going out and buying expensive stainless steel sandwich boxes if you don't even eat sandwiches, right?[43] In fact, Chris from Sea Shepherd reckons "the most sustainable thing you can do is to buy less." [44]



HOW TO CHOOSE WHAT TO USE

If you've got reusable plastic or stainless-steel containers at home, they are great for fruit or smaller things,[45] silicone yoghurt pouches are great for packaging yoghurt,[46] and beeswax wraps are the ultimate replacement for cling wrap.[47] Utilising natural packaging is also great – many healthy foods, like bananas and apples have been perfectly packaged by nature and layers of plastic will only create unnecessary waste.[48]

INSPIRATION



Fill a soft lunchbag with reusable packaging like silicone snap-lock bags, plastic containers, beeswax wraps and stainless steel containers to keep food hot or cold.

Load up on the bulk-baked treats and fresh fruit and veggies in a compartment lunchbox!



TIP!

'Convenience' is currently the largest reason behind single-use plastic in school lunchboxes,[49] but can be avoided by packing the night before.[50] This will give you no excuse in the morning to reach for those convenient, packaged snacks!



CHALLENGE: DIY PACKAGING

Talk to your parents about making some beeswax wraps yourself; you just need some fabric - old bedsheets or unwanted clothes are perfect [51] and beeswax, which can often be bought from your local farmers market or bulk store.[52]

Beeswax wraps help keep food fresher for longer,[53] reduce waste [54] and making your own saves money![55]



Try packing a litterless lunchbox by only using packaging if your food really needs it, reach for reusable packaging from around the house and prepare by packing in advance.



SOLUTION 3:

BE A LEADER

Take your Litterless journey to a whole new level by bringing your new skills to your school community!

WHY?

Lots of people just don't know how much damage their single-use plastic is creating [56] and maybe they'd feel empowered to change if they learnt about it. Maybe people in your school community want to make a difference, but just don't know where to start?

WHAT TO DO

Stretch your leadership muscles and set a great example for your peers and teachers by educating people about the issues, packing litterless lunchboxes and giving advice about how they can do the same.

Offer advice on good bulk stores nearby, or different reusable packaging options you've tried and loved.[57] Your classmates, parents and teachers are going to be much more inspired to take action if they're hearing and seeing it from you![58]



GREEN TEAM

The Year 8 PlastICS team leading positive change in Illawarra



Join your school's sustainability team or create one if nothing already exists.[59] Year 6 school captain, Verity, has found that "the best sustainability teams include of combination of students, parents and teachers"[60] as it is an issue that must be acted on together.[61]

As a team, look at your school's lunchbox waste and work out what the biggest areas are to target [62] – a bin audit is a great starting point![63] If your school is creating an excessive amount of plastic wrap waste, try running a beeswax wrap making day.[64] Providing the solutions to litterless lunchboxes is a great way to prevent that plastic from making it into the school in the first place.[65]

A school bin audit in WA



The PlastICS team in Illawarra selling handmade beeswax wraps as a solution to single use plastic



EDUCATE!

School eco leader, Ava, found that “educating the school on plastic pollution was one of the most effective solutions,”[66] creating so much positive change. Talk to your teachers about combining this into lessons – primary school teacher Fernando believes “they have a lot of freedom with what they teach.”[67] Education helps people become more aware of the issue and passionate to make a difference.[68] People won’t want to go out of their way to make changes if they don’t know WHY they are doing so.[69]



The PlastICS team in Illawarra held regular events and assemblies to educate their school community

Keeping yourself educated is also important – there is always so much more to learn. Isabel, one of the Leaders of PlastICS at Illawarra Christian School believes “sustainability is a process...something that starts small and will grow as you learn more.”[70]

Remember, leadership isn’t about forcing your opinions onto anyone or making them feel bad for their actions; it’s about setting a good example and inspiring change in those around you.[71] They may only be small changes, but when heaps of people are doing them every day, it can make a HUGE difference.[72]



SOLUTION 4:

GO NUDE FOOD

Nude Food Days are great for the school and the world, saving money[73] and hugely reducing your school's waste![74]

WHY?

As we already know, litter has **TERRIBLE** impacts on the planet and animals,[75] but many people don't realise that regardless of whether plastic ends up in the ocean or landfill, it is still leaving a negative mark on us and the planet.[76] Plastic **NEVER** goes away,[77] and still causes harm even if it is responsibly disposed of. Plastic that ends up in landfill releases acidic chemicals and toxins into the soil as it decays, ruining valuable land.[78]



Landfill site

WHAT TO DO



Talk to school leadership about organising a school Nude Food Day,[79] or even just start in your classroom, encouraging everyone to pack their lunchbox without any rubbish.[80]

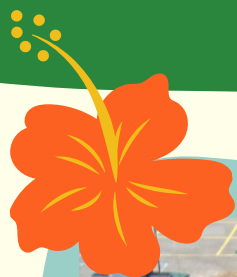
Even if it's only for a day, the average primary school can save around 75kg of plastic waste if all students pack Nude Food.[81] Best of all, Nude Food Days can even build lifelong habits!



TURN IT INTO A COMPETITION!

Turning it into a competition can be a great way to get everyone engaged.[82] Which class can reduce their waste the most? Which student can pack Nude Food lunchboxes for the most days in a row? Prizes like reusable packaging can be a great incentive and build some friendly competition in the school.[83]

Remember that not everyone will be keen to get involved, and at the end of the day, your job isn't to push opinions onto anyone.[84] Primary school teacher, Fernando, suggests that "students can bring rubbish, however, they must take it back home with them." [85] By doing this, at least plastic is staying out of landfill and could be responsibly recycled through soft plastic recycling at home.[86]



SAVE MONEY!

Nude Food days also save schools heaps of money![87] Most primary schools are spending over \$10,000 every year on waste disposal![88]

Think about how much money you could save by cutting down on this waste, money that could be going towards environmental projects like installing soft plastics recycling, solar panels, or rainwater tanks.[89]



Start the conversation in your school, whether it be with your principal, sustainability team or teacher, and encourage a Nude Food Day to save money and the world!



CONCLUSION

Start small in your own home by making some switches to your family shopping (keep an eye out for bulk stores!) and packing a litterless lunchbox each day by loading up on naturally packaged foods, packing the night before and reaching for reusables.

In your school, you can inspire so much change in those around you by being a good leader, setting a great example, using education to build passion, and running Nude Food days.



The ideas in this toolkit are only the beginning of your Litterless Lunchbox journey – the possibilities for positive change are endless!

Remember to keep refusing plastic in your life and never forget that every single action makes such a huge difference in making the world a better place for us all.



PHOTO CREDITS

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