

4 Legs On The Table Of Change: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Redesign

Isn't it so that the more you look into a problem the more complicated it becomes. 'One size fits all' solutions are hard to come by these days especially when it comes to global problems like the plastic crisis. So here we are, we haven't got just one solution, instead we have a four pronged attack. Let's reduce, reuse, recycle and redesign our way out of the plastic crisis.



Glass containers are a more eco-friendly option for storing food. Credit: Amazon UK

Reduce

Sometimes plastic is the most [useful material](#) for a given task, sometimes it just isn't. One of the most effective ways to remedy the plastic crisis is to remove unnecessary plastic where possible. Here are our top four tips for doing exactly that:

1. **Clingfilm is a no no** - There are now many (more effective) alternatives to cling film that can keep food fresher for longer: reusable glass containers, kitchen foil, beeswax wraps, silicone bowl toppers; just take your pick.
2. **Paper Paper Paper** - Wherever possible try to limit the amount of products that require plastic packaging. This could mean going for loose fruit and veg in the supermarket,

swapping out bottled shower gel for bar soap and bulk buying products rather than going for lots of little packets.

Protip: Some places may even have zero-waste shops where you bring reusable containers yourself to fill with bulk products like flour, pasta, cereal, nuts etc.

3. **Quit Eating Plastic** - yup you read that right, a lot of us literally eat plastic, it's contained in many tea bags and chewing gum products. To save the planet (and your [body](#)), make sure to go for plastic free alternatives. For tea this may mean loose leaf tea or paper/fabric tea bags. For chewing gum, look out for 'Plastic free' labels.
4. **Party Mindfully** - don't worry we aren't advocating for boring celebrations, we simply mean switching out single use party products like balloons and glitter for things like tissue pompoms, flowers, lanterns and biodegradable glitter.

Reuse

It's estimated that [50%](#) of plastic is used just once before getting thrown away; by these estimates single-use plastic makes up 175 million metric tons of global waste every year! Help change this narrative by following our top three tips for plastic reusability:

1. **Metal Bottle Miracles** - Buying a reusable metal bottle can save around [150](#) plastic bottles a year! Not only do metallic bottles reduce plastic waste, they also keep drinks cooler or hotter for longer, so go on treat yourself, the planet will thank you for it ;) Protip: Why not try opting for reusable shopping bags and coffee cups? A lot of reusable shopping bags are foldable, meaning they can be kept in a handbag or pocket. Plus many cafes now offer discounts for reusable coffee cups.
2. **Reusable razors** - All you need to do is replace the steel blades and reusable razors can last years. It may seem like an expensive option at first glance, but in the long term reusable razors work out cheaper.
3. **Plastic Free Periods** - Unfortunately period products like tampons and pads use *a lot* of plastic packaging. Switch out single use products for things like period pants, reusable pads and menstrual cups, which can be washed and reused. Although menstrual cups are often made of plastic, they can last up to two years, overall making them a more eco-friendly option.



Credit: Aquaultraviolet

Recycle

Unfortunately reducing and reusing plastic can only take us so far, what do we do with the plastic we cannot eliminate? Recycle, recycle, recycle.

While this has previously been impossible due to inefficient traditional technologies, [Samsara's](#) plastic eating enzymes allow us to infinitely recycle plastic. Our enzymes break down plastic into its smallest chemical building blocks: monomers, which can be used again and again and again. It's the purest, most eco-friendly form of recycling yet!

Already we have seen the arrival of the world's first infinity recyclable Nylon 6,6 garment, thanks to Samsara's partnership with Lululemon. The fabric is made from enzymatically-recycled polyester nylon, capable of being recycled and reworn infinitely. And this is just the beginning, who knows what infinite recycling will bring us next.

Redesign

The final leg on the table of change requires more of an industrial effort, to redesign plastic products in a more eco-friendly way. This can come in many forms: designing products for long-term use, introducing industry-wide guidelines including a 'minimum recycled content' policy, making products easier to recycle (this is already being seen with non-detachable plastic bottle lids), and last but not least; excluding toxic compounds from plastic materials to improve the final quality of recycled products. In June 2019, the Environmental Coalition of Standards released their [recommendations](#) for greenifying the lifecycle of plastic, these will directly

influence the [policies](#) being laid out by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee regarding plastic production, design and disposal, set to be released in 2024.

So there you have it, the four legs on the table of change: reduce, reuse, recycle and redesign. To sum it all up, we need to stop viewing plastic as a single-use commodity and start treating it responsibly. Plastic isn't waste, it isn't evil, plastic is precious. Let's start treating it that way. Let's start designing it for longevity and disposing of it correctly. Only then will we be able to make a dent in the plastic crisis. For more information, visit the [Sam For Change](#) webpage.