

FAST FACTS OF THE BENEFITS OF CHOOSING REUSABLE SHOPPING BAGS



The Problem:

1. **Production Cost & Global Climate Change.** The production of plastic bags requires petroleum and often natural gas, both non-renewable resources that can cost big production bucks over time and contributing to global climate change.
2. **Disposal and Litter Cost.** In a landfill, plastic bags can take up to 1,000 years to degrade. Plastic bags don't biodegrade, they photo-degrade, breaking down into smaller toxic pieces usually ending up in our oceans causing dangerous bioaccumulation in the food chain.
3. **Loaded Landfills.** One bag doesn't take up much space, but millions do. Many small island developing states (SIDS) are already having problems finding space for all their garbage. Reducing the volume of waste we produce means less new garbage dumps.
4. **Marine Life.** Over 100,000 marine animals are killed each year from plastic bags. Sea turtles, water birds, and other creatures mistake them for food or become entangled in them. In some parts of the ocean, there are six pounds of plastic for every pound of plankton.
5. An estimated **one million birds and 100,000 turtles and other sea animals die of starvation each year** after ingesting discarded plastic bags which block their digestive tracks. According to the British Antarctic Survey, discarded plastic bags have been found **as far north as the Arctic Circle and as far south as The Falkland Islands**
6. **Litter.** We may think we've thrown out a plastic bag. Albeit, many blow out of trash cans and become litter. Some are carelessly tossed. They are an eyesore and scar the landscape.
7. **Flooding.** Plastic bags littering our environment can end up blocking storm drains. This contributed to recent flooding in Guyana and frequently impacts Barbados.
8. **Carbon footprint.** Producing plastic bags requires energy. Transporting bags to the store burns through more energy. Much of this energy is obtained by burning hydrocarbons, which releases carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere.
9. **Plastic is forever.** Almost every plastic bag you have touched in your lifetime still exists in some shape or form. With few exceptions, plastic bags will take thousands of years to break down. The bag my first pair of shoes came in a couple decades ago is out there, somewhere.
10. **Bag production releases pollution.** In addition to petroleum, the manufacture of bags uses dyes, plasticizers, and other toxic chemicals. Many of the byproducts of their manufacture ends up in the environment as pollution. **Chemical leaching.** Dyes and other chemicals found in plastic bags contain lead, cadmium, and other toxins that leach out into the environment.
11. **Paper bags consume more energy than plastic.** It takes more than four times as much energy to manufacture a paper bag as it does to manufacture a plastic bag and **Paper bags consume forests.** Most paper comes from tree pulp, so the impact of paper bag production on forests is enormous. In 1999, 14 million trees were cut to produce the 10 billion paper grocery bags used by Americans that year alone.
12. **Paper bags do not degrade any faster than plastic.** Paper in today's landfills does not degrade or break down at a substantially faster rate than plastic does. In modern landfills nothing completely degrades due to lack of water, light, oxygen and other necessary degradation elements.

The Solution: USE REUSABLE BAGS!



1. **Efficient transport.** It's quicker to load your car with a few reusable bags than with numerous plastic floppy sloppy bags. It's also easier to carry a few sturdy canvas bags home. Just throw them over your shoulder!
2. **Shopper incentives.** Many local supermarkets will offer shoppers discounts and program points for bagging with reusables. Small cents add up to big dollars over time.
3. In the past five years, **over a dozen countries** have banned or put a tax on disposable bags.
4. **Faster bagging at checkout & less mishaps.** Stuffing groceries into sturdy reusable bags is faster than bagging with plastic. Reusables keep their shape, can stand up, and don't require fumbling and picking apart, like plastic. Plastic bags can split open, leaving a mess in the car or on the sidewalk. Reusables don't.
5. **Less food damage & hygienic.** Canvas bags hold their shape and keep food nestled safe. Helps prevent squished salad and broken eggs. Expose yourself to less germs by using your own bags that you wash and wipe clean.
6. **Easier sorting & carrying.** At checkout, place cold items in one bag, vegetables in another. This makes unpacking foods at home quick and easy. Carrying a reusable bag home or to your car is easier on your hands. Some grocery items are too big for plastic bags. Use bigger reusable bags for milk, laundry detergent, and other larger bulkier items.
7. **Multipurpose (Recycling).** Reusable bags can be used for tasks beyond grocery shopping. When not grocery shopping, use bins and recyclable bags to take cans and containers to the local recycling depot.
8. **Show by example.** Bringing reusable bags to the shops educates other consumers on better ways to carry stuff.
9. **You can still use them for garbage** – just don't accept so many!! Do you really need 12 bags a week for garbage bags???
10. **Durability** - The average reusable bag has the lifespan of **over seven hundred disposable plastic bags**. Over a lifetime, use of reusable bags by just **one person would save over 22,000 plastic bags**. Isn't that even better incentive?