

Zero waste guide

Tips and tricks for a low-waste lifestyle



Welcome to the Zero Waste Challenge! This guide includes information about many actions you can take to reduce waste. The guide also includes planning worksheets, templates, and sample recipes to provide assistance and inspiration in setting goals, tracking your progress, and taking action.

Developing low-waste habits is a gradual process. Start with actions that make sense for you and your family. Focus on what will motivate you and the others in your household – whether that be improving your health, saving money, or protecting the environment. Try different actions to find what works for you, and build on your successes to keep slashing your trash bit by bit.

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Getting started: diverting waste



Congratulations on starting your zero-waste journey!

The first phase of becoming a zero-waste household is to look at what you take out to your bin(s) and get everything possible out of your trash can. This section contains basic information about properly getting rid of your waste through recycling, composting, donation and hazardous waste disposal.

Before making any changes, you will learn exactly what your household throws out by doing a waste sort. Use the Waste Audit and Waste Sort sheets on pages 45-49 to discover what ends up in your trash and identify areas for improvement.

If you have a specific item to get rid of and can't find disposal information here, check out the Hennepin County Green Disposal Guide at hennepin.us/greendisposalguide.

Conduct a household waste sort

Conducting a waste sort may sound intimidating or bizarre, but taking a close look at the waste your household generates can be one of the most eye-opening and important steps in reducing your waste. You may find that you're doing a great job of recycling in the kitchen, but not in other areas of the house. Or maybe you thought you didn't throw out any food waste, but find that you actually let several containers of food spoil in the back of the refrigerator this week. Once you become familiar with what you are throwing away, you will become more conscious about how your everyday actions result in avoidable waste, and you can choose areas to focus on for improvement.

Start your zero-waste journey by looking into all of your waste containers or doing a full-scale waste sort. This will establish a baseline to measure your progress against. See the waste sort guide on page 48 for instructions.

Get everyone on board

All members of your household who throw away trash should be involved in your zero-waste project. Even young kids can help! Rely on each other for support, education, and competition throughout the process.



Set up for success

Make it easy to recycle by setting up a designated bin for recycling and organics instead of using a temporary fix (paper or plastic bags can easily be confused for trash and may not be replaced after someone takes it to the curb). Make sure you have containers wherever necessary, including in the kitchen, laundry room, bathroom, office and bedrooms. If the correct option requires you to walk to another room, recyclables may end up in the trash!

Get container labels so all family members and guests can understand your recycling system. Stickers with images can help them know what to put in the bins. Order free container labels at hennepin.us/recycling.

Recycle and compost everything you can (the right way)

Most people don't realize just how much of their waste can be recycled or composted. Brush up on your knowledge of what to put in the recycling cart and your backyard compost pile or organics collection container. Confused about what is different between the methods? Keep reading! We'll start with the basics of regular recycling.



Recycling 101

Recycling has been in the news a lot lately due to shifts in markets and international policy changes. It's important to know that your recycling is still getting recycled, and overall Minnesotans are good recyclers! The best ways to support recycling are to refresh your knowledge of what can be recycled, only recycle items that are accepted, and keep stuff that isn't accepted out.

Do recycle

Paper

- Mail, office and school papers
- Magazines and catalogs
- Newspapers and inserts
- Phone books



Boxes:

- Cardboard
- Cereal and cracker boxes
- Shoe boxes, gift boxes and electronics boxes
- Toothpaste, medication and other toiletry boxes



Cartons

- Milk cartons
- Juice boxes
- Soup, broth and wine cartons



Glass

- Food and beverage bottles and jars



Plastic

Bottles and jugs:

- Water, soda and juice bottles
- Milk and juice jugs
- Ketchup and salad dressing bottles
- Dishwashing liquid bottles and detergent jugs
- Shampoo, soap and lotion bottles



Cups and containers:

- Yogurt, pudding and fruit cups
- Clear disposable cups and bowls
- Margarine, cottage cheese, and other containers
- Produce, deli and takeout containers



Metal

- Food and beverage cans
- Clean aluminum foil and pans

Don't recycle:

- Aerosol cans
 - Batteries
 - Black plastic
 - Containers that held hazardous products (such as oil, paint, and pesticides)
 - Glass or ceramic dishes, drinking glasses, and vases
 - Gift wrap that is shiny or contains glitter or foil
 - Hoses, cords, and string lights
 - Large plastic items like laundry baskets, storage tubs, and toys*
 - Microwaveable food trays
 - Paper cups and plates**
 - Paper soiled with food, such as pizza boxes from delivery, napkins, and paper towels**
 - Plastic bags (accepted in many drop-off locations such as grocery and department stores)
 - Plastic foam (Styrofoam™)
 - Plastic utensils and straws
 - Random metal items like pots, pipes, and hangers*
 - Window glass and mirrors
- An item with * is recyclable in some cities. Contact your city recycling coordinator for details. Find your city recycling coordinator's contact information at hennepin.us/recycling
- An item with ** may be accepted in organics recycling.
- If you're not sure an item can be recycled, be sure to find out or throw it in the trash.

Preparing your recycling

- Items should be clean and empty – give them a quick rinse before recycling.
- Leave plastic caps on plastic bottles.
- Metal caps can be collected in a metal can – when it's full, carefully squeeze the top of the can shut and place it in your recycling.
- Remove pumps from spray bottles.
- Flatten boxes.
- Don't bag your recyclables – place them loose in your recycling cart.
- Try not to crush containers like milk jugs, juice cartons or cans. With modern sorting equipment, uncrushed containers are more likely to end up in the right spot.

Important items to keep out of your recycling cart (and what to do instead)

Plastic bags



Plastic bags and wrap get tangled in the equipment at recycling sorting facilities and workers spend hours each day removing them. Plastic bags and wrap can be recycled if brought back to a retail drop-off location.

Keep your plastic bags separate and bring them to collection bins at the front of stores such as Cub Foods, Goodwill, JCPenney, Lunds & Byerlys, Kohl's, Kowalski's Markets, Target, Walmart, and metro area food co-ops.

Many types of plastic bags are accepted, including: retail, carryout, produce, newspaper, bread, dry cleaning, zip-top food storage, bubble wrap and air pillows (deflate), product wrapping on paper towels and bathroom tissue. Bags must be empty, clean, and dry. Learn more at plasticfilmrecycling.org.

Bags of recycling



Recycling in bags don't get properly sorted at the recycling facility, and recyclers can't tell what's in the bag. Make sure to place your recycling loose in your recycling cart.

Large plastic items



Large plastic items like laundry baskets, storage bins, lawn furniture, and plastic toys, and other large plastic items can't be recycled. There are not good markets for recycling these items, and they are difficult to

sort at recycling facilities. Purchase high-quality items, use them for as long as possible, and donate items that are in good shape when you're ready to get rid of them.

Random metal items



Random metal items such as pots and pans, pipes, hangers, and tools can damage equipment and harm workers at recycling facilities. All metal can be recycled, just not in your recycling cart at home. Take

random metal items to a scrap metal recycler; find locations on the Green Disposal Guide at hennepin.us/greendisposalguide.

Propane tanks



Cylinders and tanks contain a compressed gas that makes them explosive and potential fire hazards. It is illegal to put propane tanks, helium tanks, and other pressurized cylinders in your household recycling or

trash. Properly dispose of all pressurized cylinders; find options on the Green Disposal Guide.

Single-use plastic utensils and straws



Plastic utensils and straws are too small and difficult to sort at recycling facilities, and there aren't good recycling markets for them. Avoid them by choosing reusable options or refusing them when you can.

Paper plates, cups, and takeout containers



Paper cups, plates, and takeout containers can't be recycled because they are often lined with plastic or contaminated with food. Avoid them by choosing reusable cups, mugs and plates.

Electronics and batteries



Electronics and batteries can't be sorted properly at recycling facilities, and certain batteries can cause fires at facilities. But batteries and electronics should be recycled at drop-offs. Learn options for batteries and electronics on the Green Disposal Guide.

Cords and string lights



Keep "tangles" like cords, hoses and string lights out of your recycling bin. As the name suggests, these items get tangled in the equipment at recycling facilities. You can recycle cords and string lights at Hennepin County drop-off facilities. Learn more on the Green Disposal Guide.

Needles and sharps



Needles and sharps should be managed and disposed of safely to prevent injury and disease transmission from needle-sticks. They should never be placed in your

recycling cart. Learn about disposal options on the Green Disposal Guide.

Small items

Anything smaller than 2" x 2", or smaller than your fist, will not go through the recycling process well. Small items fall through the cracks of the sorting process and can end up contaminating other recycling streams, especially glass.

What happens to your recycling

Recycling starts at the curb with you separating your recyclables from trash so they can be picked up by your hauler.

The next step is processing. Haulers bring the recyclables to material recovery facilities (MRFs) to be sorted, graded, cleaned, and prepared for markets. Materials are sorted to remove contaminants that may damage processing equipment and graded to reclaim higher-value materials.

Various methods are used at MRFs to sort materials. Mechanical processes such as magnets, air jets, and screens use physical differences among materials, such as weight or magnetism, to sort them. Hand-sorting is used to sort materials that the mechanical methods cannot.

After the recyclables are processed at the MRF, the materials are sold to manufacturers that make them into a wide variety of new products. Paper is turned into a pulp and recycled back into paper, newspaper, boxes, napkins, paper towels, egg cartons and more. Glass is crushed, heated and recycled into glass bottles and jars or used in insulation, floor tile, road construction projects and more. Steel or aluminum is heated, melted and recycled back into steel or aluminum cans. Plastics are shredded, melted and recycled into a variety of products, including plastic bottles, carpet, furniture, clothing and more.

The final step in the recycling process is closing the recycling loop by buying products made from recycled materials.



Composting and organics recycling 101

Composting is a microbial process that converts waste from your kitchen and yard into a nutrient-rich soil amendment or mulch. Gardeners have used compost for centuries to improve their soil and to supply essential nutrients for plant growth.

Hennepin County residents have two options for turning food waste into compost - backyard composting and organics recycling. Depending on program availability and personal preference, some people use one method, while others use both. Since you can include different materials in each, choose what works for your household!

1. Backyard composting involves creating a pile of organic materials that break down into compost in your yard. The pile usually needs to be contained in some way, so check your city's ordinances or ask your city recycling coordinator.

Pros:

- ✓ Great way to recycle yard waste like plant trimmings and leaves as well as fruit and vegetable scraps right at home.
- ✓ Get free compost to use in your garden.
- ✓ Can be used as a learning activity for kids.

Cons

- Cannot include meat, oils, dairy products, or certain compostable items (such as certified compostable cups, take-out containers and utensils).
- Requires maintenance that some people find burdensome.

2. Organics recycling is the collection of food scraps, non-recyclable paper products and certified compostable plastics that are sent to an industrial-scale composting facility. Non-recyclable paper products include materials like napkins, tissues, egg cartons and paper towels that aren't accepted in single-sort recycling. Certified compostable plastics have been specially designed to compost and have been tested by a separate company to meet certain requirements for compostability. Organic materials are bagged and picked up as part of your waste service similar to trash and recycling, or you can take them to a drop-off location.

Pros:

- ✓ Can include all food waste including bones and dairy as well as compostable paper and compostable plastics.
- ✓ Good for people who don't have the outdoor space or ability to do backyard composting.

Cons:

- You do not get the finished product for use in your yard or garden.
- Organic materials are collected separately from yard waste due to regulations about invasive species.
- Requires bagging either in paper or compostable bags.

Indoor collection containers

For either method of composting, you will need to collect your organics in some kind of a container inside. Covers on collection containers can be more problematic than helpful as bacteria decomposing your food waste without air create the stinky smells you might associate with garbage. If you do want to use a bin with a cover, it should have vents or a carbon filter to allow air flow. If you are having a problem with odor or flies, you can keep your collected organics in the fridge or freezer until it's time to take it to your backyard pile or organics cart.



Backyard composting basics

What to compost

Many of us understand what we should compost, but we sometimes get confusing information about what we should NOT compost. Composting is a microbial process and microbes – also called microorganisms – will not decompose synthetic products such as plastics or glass. Home composting systems typically don't reach high enough temperatures to break down meat, dairy, grease and oil. These materials can also attract critters to your compost bin and cause foul odors. Feces from pets may carry pathogens that could cause health problems. Large pieces of wood do not compost quickly, so wood should be chipped or shredded and used minimally. Organic materials that can be added to enhance the nutritive value of compost include blood and bone meal, cotton seed meal and aquatic plants.



Compost:		DO NOT compost:	
✓	• Yard waste: plant trimmings, leaves, weeds without seeds, pine needles	✗	• Meat and dairy: meat pieces, dairy products, bones, fish scraps, raw eggs
✓	• Kitchen waste: fruit and vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, tea bags, egg shells	✗	• Fats: cooking oil, drippings and grease
✓	• Materials that add nutritive value: blood and bone meal, cotton seed meal, aquatic plants	✗	• Synthetics: motor oil, glass, plastic, styrofoam, polyester
✓	• Small amounts of: sawdust, wood chips, small sticks	✗	• Feces: from dogs, cats, and humans
✓	• Wood ashes: add in small amounts. Ashes act as lime source and affect the pH of your compost.	✗	• Weeds: with seeds
		✗	• Large pieces of wood

What about cuttings treated with herbicides?

Studies have shown that low levels of herbicides are detectable even in well-decomposed yard trimmings, but these levels are less than 1 percent of the level found in trimmings prior to composting and is not considered a risk for using in the garden. Ideally, grass clippings from lawns treated with herbicides should be left on the lawn to decompose, which allows the herbicides to degrade.



Benefits of using compost

As a soil amendment:

Compost loosens and aerates soil and improves water and nutrient retention. Adding 1-2 inches of compost to the top 6-8 inches of your garden improves soil structure over time, making the soil easier to work while creating a better environment for plant growth. Compost is beneficial to a variety of soil types. It improves drainage and aeration in heavy clay soils and increases the moisture-holding capacity of sandy soils.

Adding compost to your soil will attract beneficial organisms such as earthworms and microorganisms that break down organic matter naturally. Compost also improves seeding, plant emergence and water infiltration by reducing the potential for soil crusting.

As a mulch:

Adding 6-8 inches of compost to garden beds suppresses weeds by blocking light to the soil surface. The mulch will decompose and add organic matter to the soil. Compost also reduces the potential for erosion by protecting the soil surface from wind and hard rain.

Using compost as mulch reduces moisture loss. Top-dress your lawn with compost to conserve moisture and add organic matter. Use compost in window boxes and container gardens where rapid moisture loss is a factor. Compost may also keep soils cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.

Steps to backyard composting

✓ Assemble your compost bin

Compost bins are for sale for at the Hennepin County Drop-off Facility in Brooklyn Park during regular facility hours. Many lawn and garden stores also sell compost bins. Additionally, you can search for options online to make a compost bin yourself with a few materials and tools.



✓ Find a place for your compost bin

Choose a place in your yard where your bin is easily accessible but not an eyesore. Some people incorporate their bin into the design of their landscape and plant their garden right around the bin!

Select a spot where your bins gets some sun and heats up your pile. Locating your bin in full sun will heat up the compost pile faster but will dry it out more often, requiring periodic watering. Some shade will prevent this.

Good drainage and accessibility is important for your compost bin. You should have enough room around the bin to allow you to turn the compost and a water source nearby in case you need to add moisture. Think about being able to access your bin year-round so you can continue composting in the winter.

Each city has its own ordinances about composting. Check with your city recycling coordinator for details concerning your local laws.

✓ Layer your materials

Start your pile with a 6-inch layer of brown materials, such as twigs and/or cornstalks. This will help elevate your pile and allow air to circulate at the base of the pile. Then alternate layers of brown materials and green materials. Add a few layers of garden soil or finished compost, which contain the microorganisms required to speed up decomposition. Add a little water to dampen the pile, and you are on your way!

✓ Maintain your compost pile

As your compost pile begins the decomposition process, the temperature of the pile will begin to rise, especially in the center. A well-built pile may reach temperatures of 130°-160° F in just a few days. The pile will begin to cool in four to five days, and a depression may appear in the middle of the pile. At this point, it is time to turn the pile. Use a garden fork and turn the outside of the pile inward. Steam may rise from the pile – this is a sign that the decomposition process is working! If the pile is dry, add a small amount of water. If it is too wet, add some dry materials such as dry leaves or cornstalks. Cover the pile with a layer of brown materials, soil or compost (to ensure any food scraps are buried), and it will start to re-heat.



Turn your pile on a regular basis – about once a week. Doing so will speed up the decomposition process, giving you finished compost sooner.

✓ Identify when your compost is finished

Under warm conditions, a well-tended compost pile will be finished and ready for use in about 2-4 months. Left untended, a bin may take a year to decompose. A finished compost pile is about half its original size, is loose, dark and crumbly, and smells good – like fresh soil. Most of the materials that went into the compost pile should not be identifiable. Another sign that your pile is fully composted and ready for use is when it no longer heats up.

The recipe for a successful compost pile



There are four basic ingredients for good compost: carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and moisture.

Carbon and nitrogen: In the composting process, microorganisms use carbon for energy and nitrogen to make proteins. For home composting, this translates to a proportion of three parts carbon (brown materials) to one part nitrogen (green materials). Given this “diet,” microorganisms can make short work of your compost.

Browns (carbon)

Dried grasses
Leaves
Straw
Sawdust
Twigs

3 to 1

Greens (nitrogen)

Coffee grounds
Fruit and vegetable peelings
Grass clippings
Green leaves
Plant trimmings

Oxygen and moisture are important for the health and activity of the microorganisms. An active compost pile – one in which microorganisms are actively converting organic materials to compost – has good air circulation and the moisture consistency of a wrung-out sponge. If a pile is compacted or too wet or too dry, microorganisms will cease their work and the pile will become passive.

Air circulation can be accomplished though turning your pile with a garden fork. Do not allow the pile to become soggy as this causes anaerobic conditions (meaning no air) and usually produces a foul smell. A pile can become too wet due to excess water from rain or from too much green material. This can be corrected by adding carbon (brown) material and by turning the pile to increase the oxygen level.

Troubleshooting common problems

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency has information on how to troubleshoot common backyard composting problems, such as what to do if your pile smells, is composting slowly, or attracts pests. You can find it by searching pca.state.mn.us for “common compost problems.”

Tips for home composting

- Keep your compost pile at the right moisture level. If your compost pile has a bad odor, it lacks air circulation or it may be too wet. Try turning the pile and/or adding dry material.
- If your compost pile is not heating up, it may need more nitrogen or “green” material.
- Bury kitchen scraps at least 8 inches deep in the compost to discourage critters.
- You can keep adding to your compost pile as it is composting; however, you want to start a second pile if you have enough materials.
- Add a layer of straw or hay to the top of your compost pile in the winter to keep it warm, and keep on composting!
- The best pile is made up of a variety of materials.
- The smaller the pieces of compost material, the faster the pile will decompose.

Organics recycling

Organics recycling service is available in some cities and through some haulers. Contact your city recycling coordinator or hauler about how to start service. Organics recycling service in Medicine Lake, Medina, Minneapolis, Osseo, St. Louis Park, St. Bonifacius and Wayzata does not have an additional charge – it is already included in the waste bill. If you want to collect organics but organics recycling service is not available, organics recycling drop-offs are available in Bloomington, Hopkins/Minnetonka, Minneapolis, Richfield, St. Anthony Village, St. Louis Park, and at the Hennepin County drop-off facilities in Bloomington and Brooklyn Park. Check with your city for details. Learn more about the organics recycling options available at hennepin.us/organics.



Cities with Curbside Organics Recycling

- Curbside Organics Recycling is available through certain haulers
- Curbside Organics Recycling is available to all residents
- Drop-off sites are available

Tips for collecting organics at home



Use a kitchen pail lined with a compostable bag to collect food scraps, paper towels and food-soiled paper.



If you have issues with smells or flies, keep "wet" organics in the refrigerator or freezer. You can also create a fruit fly trap using vinegar and a few drops of dish soap.



Convert your existing garbage can into an organics bin and use a smaller garbage can.



Label your containers so everyone in your household knows how to sort their waste. Order free labels for your home recycling, organics and trash bins at hennepin.us/organics



Collect organics (and recycling) throughout your home. Don't forget about the bathrooms, bedrooms, laundry room and office!

Accepted for organics recycling

All food

- Fruits and vegetables
- Meat, fish and bones
- Dairy products
- Eggs and egg shells
- Pasta, beans and rice
- Bread and cereal
- Nuts and shells



Food-soiled paper

- Pizza boxes from delivery
- Napkins and paper towels
- Paper egg cartons



Other compostable household items

- Coffee grounds and filters
- Hair and nail clippings
- Facial tissues
- Cotton balls and swabs with paper stems
- Houseplants and flowers
- Tissues
- Wooden items such as chopsticks, popsicle sticks and toothpicks



Certified compostable products

- Compostable paper and plastic cups, plates, bowls, utensils and containers

Look for the BPI logos or the term "compostable" on certified products.



Not accepted

- Animal and pet waste, litter or bedding
- Cleaning or baby wipes
- Diapers and sanitary products
- Dryer lint and dryer sheets
- Fast food wrappers
- Frozen food boxes
- Grease or oil
- Gum
- Microwave popcorn bags
- Products labeled "biodegradable"
- Recyclable items (cartons, glass, metal, paper, plastic)
- Styrofoam™
- Yard waste

Certified compostable products



Paper and plastic plates, bowls, cups, containers, and utensils must be certified compostable to be accepted. Look for the BPI logo or the term "compostable" on certified products. If an item is not certified compostable, it is not accepted for organics recycling and should go in the trash. Examples of items that must be certified compostable include: coffee cups, utensils, to-go containers, plastic cups, and more.



Donating and selling reusable goods



Keep your durable goods out of the trash! Whether you're moving, redecorating, or just have something you no longer love tucked away in a closet, donation is a great way to give your items a second life.

Getting rid of your stuff

It may be helpful to designate a spot to put everything you'll sell or donate. Some people keep a box or a bag handy and, when it fills up, they take it to a reuse store. Options for getting rid of your useable goods include:

Drop off

Drop off your goods at local reuse retailers like Arc's Value Village, Goodwill, Salvation Army, or local thrift store. All you need to do is make sure your items are clean and usable. Many stores offer a coupon or tax receipt for donating your items.

Sell

Sell your stuff at consignment shops or hold a garage sale and get some money back for your goods! Many cities and neighborhoods also host larger garage sales with multiple sellers. The website Thrifty Minnesota (thriftyminnesota.com) posts yearly lists of garage sales by city, or watch your usual neighborhood news sources.

Post online

List your items on sites like Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace or sale groups, Nextdoor, and Twin Cities Freecycle. Sites like these may be useful in getting rid of larger items that would be a hassle to move or something you don't need to get rid of immediately. You can work out a pickup arrangement with potential buyers, or just let more people know about what you have.

Swap

Participate in a clothing swap. Join or host an event where you trade unwanted, usable clothes and accessories. Search the internet for clothing swaps in your area, or check out a guide on how to host a swap of your own (examples: doitgreen.org/wp-content/uploads/swap_guide_do_it_green.pdf, realsimple.com/holidays-entertaining/entertaining/everyday-celebrations/host-swap-party/swap-party-basics)

Choose to Reuse

Visit Hennepin County's Choose to Reuse website at hennepin.us/choosetoreuse to find retailers and services nearby to donate and sell your stuff. The website also includes articles on reuse topics and green event listings.

Properly dispose of household hazardous wastes



Some waste should never be in your curbside trash in the first place. Batteries, electronics, household chemicals, and medicines are common items people may not realize should be taken to a drop-off facility. Other hazardous waste like old mercury thermometers and fluorescent lights can cause confusion, too.

Hennepin County drop-off facilities

Many items are accepted at Hennepin County drop-off facilities, including:

- Appliances (for a fee)
- Automotive fluids, fuels, oil and lead-acid batteries
- Electronics (some fees apply)
- Household, lawn and garden products, including batteries, cleaning products, fluorescent light bulbs, paints and stains, pesticides, and thermostats and thermometers that contain mercury
- Mattresses and box springs (for a fee)
- Personal care products including hair spray, nail polish remover, and perfume
- Tires (for a fee)

Learn more at hennepin.us/dropoffs.

Additional disposal options

These items have additional disposal options.

Batteries

Batteries should be recycled. Some batteries contain toxic metals that can pose a threat to human health and the environment. Use rechargeables to reduce the number of batteries you use. To store batteries for recycling, place clear tape on both the positive (+) and negative (-) terminals to prevent fires, and place them in a clear plastic bag. Battery recycling containers are available at many libraries, city halls, and community centers. See hennepin.us/batteryrecycling for locations.

Electronics

If your electronics work, give them away or sell them. If they are broken, bring them to a Hennepin County Fix-It Clinic for help with troubleshooting and repair. If they no longer function and are not repairable, look for manufacturers and retailers with recycling take back programs or take to a Hennepin County drop-off facility. See the Green Disposal Guide at hennepin.us/greendisposalguide for more details. Before disposing of your items, make sure you remove all personal data and files.

Medicines

Unwanted or unused medicines should be brought to a Hennepin County medicine drop box for safe and proper disposal. All types of medicines from households, including prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, supplements and pet medicines, are accepted. Find more information and a map of locations at hennepin.us/medicine.

Sharps

Dispose of sharps safely to prevent injury and disease transmission from needle-sticks. Check with your healthcare provider to see if they accept sharps for disposal, destroy them at home with a needle destruction device, take to a Hennepin County drop-off facility in Brooklyn Park or Bloomington, or use a mail-in program. Store your needles and sharps in a rigid, puncture-resistant, plastic container with a screw-on lid, such as an empty laundry detergent bottle. You can also purchase a sharps disposable container from a pharmacy. To prevent breakage, do NOT use a glass container. Visit the Green Disposal Guide at hennepin.us/greendisposalguide and search for Needles and Sharps for more information.

Find other disposal options for household hazardous waste at hennepin.us/greendisposalguide or call 612-348-3777.

See How to identify and reduce harmful chemicals in your home at hennepin.us/residents/recycling-hazardous-waste/reduce-household-hazardous-waste for additional information.

Reducing waste



After properly disposing of all the waste you currently create, you can begin to take a look at where you can prevent it in the first place. Remember that zero waste is not just about moving items out of the trash but reducing what goes into your recycling and organics recycling as well. Not creating waste in the first place is always better than recycling it!

If you haven't done so already, note which materials you still have in abundance. You can conduct another informal waste audit by going through your waste streams again. Use the worksheets starting on page 44 to help lay out your goals and monitor your progress.

Once you've evaluated your waste, ask yourself the following questions and choose your goals:

- What is left in my trash? What do I have the most of in my recycling and organics?
- What can I change about my waste?
- Are there certain areas of the house that will be easier than others to tackle first?
- What are my reasons for trying to reduce waste, in order to prioritize my actions? (again, think about what matters: health, cost, environment, de-cluttering, etc.)

The following section includes a breakdown of how to reduce waste from different areas of the home - including the kitchen, bathroom, laundry room and garage - as well as when it comes to kids, pets, traveling, cleaning, remodeling and hosting gatherings.

Kitchen



Kitchens are the heart and soul of many homes, so it makes sense that a lot of the waste generated in a household comes from this central hub. There are many adjustments you can make to your habits that will reduce waste. You may change your routine before you get to the grocery store, change where or how you shop entirely, add a few extra recipes to your toolbox, or even tweak your go-to foods to make a happier and healthier low-waste kitchen.

Reduce packaging

Avoid excess packaging of your food by ditching single-serve portions for snacks and meals and instead buying the big box or bag and re-packing your food into your own reusable containers. You will find this saves you money, too! One example: instead of buying single-serve baby carrots for lunches, buy a large bag of carrots, slice into sticks and pack in containers. Remember to compost the peels and reuse the produce bag or add it to your plastic film recycling. You can also reduce waste further by buying unbagged carrots, using a reusable produce bag, and leaving the skins on rather than peeling them.

Remember your reusable bags



Remember to pack everything up in reusable grocery bags. If you need an extra reminder, you can get a window cling to put on your car window, door, or whatever location is closest to where you store your bags.

Remember to pack everything up in reusable grocery bags. If you need an extra reminder, you can get a window cling to put on your car window, door, or whatever location is closest to where you store your bags.

"One of the simplest things many people can do, but one of the hardest habits to start, is to bring your own bag. Many of us function on autopilot, and this includes going to the grocery store. I would try my best to leave my bags where I could find them before I went to the store – on the counter, on the doorknob, in my trunk, and I would almost always walk right past them! I started putting my reusable bags in the front seat of my car with me so I would have no excuse to forget them. Now after doing this for about 6 months, I've been able to remember my bags much better, but it takes a long time to start any new habit despite best intentions!" - student

Packing lunches

A lot of pre-packaged or convenience food comes in non-recyclable and non-compostable wrapping. To reduce waste, pack your own lunch from food you made. Remember that reusable lunch bags, utensils, and napkins are not just for the kids, but should be used by all family members. If you need an extra set of dishware or utensils, check your local thrift store for options.



Pictured: Reusable sandwich and snack bags and reusable sealing bowls.

Instead of buying new, you may be able to reuse packaging from foods that you bought or storage containers you already have.



Buy in bulk

Reduce food packaging even more by shopping in the bulk section of the grocery store and using your own produce bags and containers at farmers markets, co-ops or natural food stores (Check out the Minnesota Grown Directory at minnesotagrown.com for a farmers market listing). Ask your grocery store before using your own containers if they have a bulk bin section as some check-out aisles cannot remove the container weight, or “tare” weight, from your purchase.

If you find that your store cannot weigh outside bags or containers, you can always use a lightweight reusable bag instead of plastic produce bags, and use any reusable bag or container when items are sold by count instead of by weight. Check the price signs to find out how you’ll pay. Examples by count: “\$0.79 each,” or “2 for \$4”

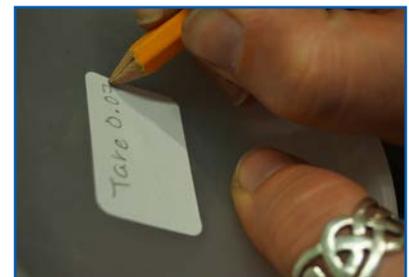
“Bulk packaged” vs. “bulk loose”

Large wholesale club stores like Costco and Sam’s Club offer foods in bulk quantities, but this doesn’t always mean you are preventing waste. Many items are still individually packaged within a larger box or bag. Ask yourself if the packaging is reducing waste, and remember to only buy an amount of food your family can consume before it spoils. It can be tempting to buy a large amount of produce at a good price, but if it goes bad, you negate the benefits both to you and to the environment. Regular grocery stores and co-ops have “loose” bulk goods, where you usually scoop or pour the product directly into your own container or a provided bag. These options can be very helpful when trying to reduce waste because you can avoid much of the packaging.

How to buy in bulk

You may be intimidated by the long lines of bins filled with nuts, grains and flours at your store, but buying in bulk is usually an easy and economical way to buy your food and avoid waste at the same time.

1. Choose the item you want to purchase.
2. If you can use your own container, find the tare weight, or weight of the container, by weighing your empty container and writing down its weight. The grocery store can then subtract the weight of the container when charging for your food or product.
3. Fill up your container or bag with the food or product.
4. Make sure to write down the product number, listed as PLU, from the bulk container onto your individual container.



Reduce wasted food

Another one of the most easily avoidable sources of waste in the kitchen is food. There are many steps you can take to reduce food waste.

Eat the food you buy



Start reducing food waste by eating the food you buy. Keep track of the freshness of your ingredients, and check the cupboards and refrigerator before buying more. Look up recipes based on whatever you need to use up first. It is helpful

to create a designated spot for "eat first" foods in your refrigerator or pantry to help other family members notice, too. And don't forget to eat or freeze leftovers or items about to spoil.

Practice meal planning

A good way to make life simpler and meal prep quicker is to put together meals in batches. Meal planning involves preparing for meals and snacks in advance. You can create individual or family sized portions of fresh or frozen foods, often for the week ahead. When you plan meals, you can go to the grocery store with a list to buy exactly what you need and no more.

Make your shopping list based on how many meals you'll eat at home. Then look in the refrigerator and cupboards first to avoid buying food you already have. Make a list each week of what needs to be used up and plan upcoming meals around that. Remember that casseroles, stir-fries, frittatas, soups, and smoothies are great ways to use leftovers. Search for websites that provide suggestions for using leftover ingredients. Many apps and websites exist to help you get started (e.g. savethefood.com/tips/10-easy-tips-for-meal-planning)



The U.S. EPA has a food waste reduction toolkit with printable worksheets available at epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/food-too-good-waste-implementation-guide-and-toolkit. The toolkit contains the following worksheets to help you buy, store and prep foods:

- Smart Shopping: Shop with Meals in Mind
- Smart Prep: Prep Now, Eat Later
- Smart Storage: Fruits and Vegetables Storage Tips

Understand food labels

There is no universally accepted system for dating food in the U.S. The only federally regulated food labeling is on baby formula to ensure that the nutrient levels listed on the packaging are accurate until the expiration date. The dates on food labels are generally not expiration dates but merely suggestions as to when the product is at its freshest. Learning the meaning of food labels can ensure you don't throw out food that is still safe to eat.

- "Use by" - products with this label should be consumed by the date listed on the package.
- "Best if used by" describes product quality. After that date, the product may not be at peak flavor but is generally safe to consume.



Use your sense of smell, sight and judgment to determine when food has gone bad. Don't use foods that have developed an off odor, flavor or appearance.

Properly store your food

Did you know that where you put food in your refrigerator can contribute to how long it lasts? Make sure you follow some basic guidelines explained in the graphic below about where to store foods based on the average temperatures in your fridge.



Other food storage tips:

- Keep the fridge temperature at 40 degrees or colder. Bacteria do not like the cold.
- Store fruits and vegetables separately from each other as fruits emit natural gases that accelerate ripening and can make other nearby produce spoil faster.
- Wait to wash berries until you want to eat them to prevent mold.
- Freeze food such as bread, sliced fruit, or meat that you know you won't be able to eat in time.
- Don't keep perishable food, such as bread or wine, on top of the fridge. The fridge gives off heat that can make foods spoil faster.
- Prepare and cook perishable items then freeze them for use throughout the month. For example, bake and freeze chicken breasts or fry and freeze taco meat.

To refrigerate, or not to refrigerate?

Yes

Apples, berries, cherries, grapes, kiwi, lemons, oranges

Most vegetables

Fresh herbs, wrapped in a damp towel or in a container

Yes, but...leave out at room temperature until ripe and then refrigerate:

Melons, nectarines, apricots, peaches, plums, avocados, pears, tomatoes

Not necessary – these store well outside of the refrigerator, in a cool, dry place (unless cut up):

Bananas, mangos, papayas, and pineapples

Potatoes, onions (keep in a dark place)

Winter squash

To find more information about proper storage to make your food last its longest, check out [savethefood.com/food-storage](https://www.savethefood.com/food-storage).

Replace disposables with reusables

In order to reduce waste, try to get rid of some or all of the disposable products you use in the kitchen. These products may feel convenient, but don't forget the time and money you use to constantly replace and dispose of them! Which of these common products do you use, and which can you replace?

- **Paper coffee cups:** Paper coffee cups usually have a plastic coating that makes them unacceptable for organics recycling, and the #6 plastic lid isn't great for recycling, either, because it's a low-value plastic. Remember to bring a reusable coffee mug when you get takeout coffee (some places even give you a discount!).
- **Paper towels and synthetic sponges:** Trade in for an old fashioned cloth rag and a scrubber brush or scraper. These are more durable and can be washed instead of thrown out.
- **Plastic baggies:** Use reusable containers or cloth snack bags instead.
- **Plastic grocery bags:** Instead of going through countless bags each month and worrying about where to store and take them for recycling, keep a few reusable bags near the door or in your car so you always have what you need even if you didn't plan to stop.
- **Plastic produce and bulk food bags:** Don't forget that these can be replaced as well! If your grocery store accepts tare weights, you can use any container for your produce and bulk goods. Just remember to write down the weight before using them. If your store does not have the capability to separate these weights, use your own bag on items sold by count (for example: if limes are \$.50 each). You can also use a lightweight bag for other purchases sold by weight if you don't mind paying a little bit extra to avoid waste.
- **Plastic wrap:** Use reusable containers with lids for storing foods, place a plate over a bowl in the refrigerator or try an option like beeswax cloth to wrap over the top of your containers. A few common brands are Bee's Wrap and Abeego. Or you can try making your own (search the web for a tutorial).
- **Single use coffee pods:** Single serve coffee makers such as Keurigs create a lot of waste with no recycling option. You can pull apart the little cup and compost the grounds, but no area recyclers accept the plastic or foil lid. If you already have a machine, try reusable pods, which are now widely available in stores and online.

Dining on the go

When you do eat out, choose sit-down restaurants that are more likely to serve their food on reusable dishes. It is also handy to bring your own containers for leftovers to avoid taking unwanted packaging waste home with you. As an extra trash-reducing step, choose to eat at restaurants that you know recycle and compost their waste.

If you drive often or are planning a road trip, pack snacks and meals so you don't have to stop for fast food or at gas stations as these places have a lot of processed foods in non-recyclable packaging. You can even keep some easy-to-store, long-lasting snacks like nuts, granola or dried fruit in your car as a backup for when hunger hits unexpectedly.

Make your own

See recipes starting on page 50 to learn how to make the following waste-reducing products:

- Pizza dough (eliminate frozen pizza boxes or cardboard takeout boxes)
- Yogurt (reduce plastic packaging)
- Mustard (reduce or eliminate plastic squeeze bottles)
- Stovetop popcorn (eliminate potentially harmful and non-recyclable microwave popcorn bags)
- Infused water and herbal teas (reduce or eliminate plastic bottles or tea bags and paper or plastic packaging)
- Kitchen cleaners (reduce or eliminate hazardous chemicals and plastic packaging)

"When I'm going out to eat, I know ahead of time that I will only eat half my meal. I've been working on getting in the habit of bringing my own container for leftovers. I get frustrated at times because I don't like carrying more things into a restaurant. However, whenever I've managed to bring my own container, I hear positive comments from strangers. Many people really appreciate the idea of using your own container instead of making extra waste by taking a to-go container. It's worth it to keep trying."

- Edina resident

Bathroom



Most waste from the bathroom is recyclable or compostable. For the trash you do have, there are many small changes you can make that reduce the amount you have to toss out.

Reduce packaging

Don't let your personal care products take over your counter or cupboards! Some products can serve more than one purpose, and many are unnecessary. Consider cutting back on the number of products you use for your skin, face and hair to save time, money and waste.

If you can, buy soaps or shampoos in bar form or in refillable containers. Many co-ops have refilling stations where you can bring your empty, reusable containers. You can also avoid excess packaging of your toiletries if you learn how to make your own products, including scrubs, moisturizers, and even deodorant.

Reduce and properly dispose of chemicals

By simplifying and replacing your personal care and cleaning products, you can protect the health of your family. Search the Environmental Working Group's databases of products at ewg.org to find out more on the safety of the chemicals in your home.

Remember that some common items you keep in your bathroom cabinet are considered hazardous waste. This includes unused nail polish, nail polish remover, hair spray, drain cleaner and other cleaners. These products should not be thrown in the trash and should be brought to a hazardous waste drop-off facility or collection event.

When it comes to cleaning the bathroom, you may not need as many types of cleaners as you think. Check out the Green Cleaning Guide at hennepin.us/residents/recycling-hazardous-waste/reduce-household-hazardous-waste for easy recipes you can make from common household ingredients.

Reduce medicines

Medications can be a source of trash that is hard to avoid, but there are some reduction options. Look for painkillers or other common over-the-counter medicines that come in recyclable bottles rather than individually packaged pills. Be sure to purchase medicines in quantities you can use before they expire, and if you do need to throw medicines away, be sure to do it properly by bringing them to a medicine drop box. Find locations and details on using the boxes at hennepin.us/medicine.

When you get sick, use simple home remedies that help alleviate cold symptoms and produce little to no waste:

- Gargle with warm salt water or drink warm tea with honey for a sore throat.
- Use a warm washcloth to sooth painful sinuses.
- Breathe warm humid air (from a shower, pot of hot water or humidifier) or prop up your pillow at night to relieve congestion.
- Drink or consume plenty of liquids. Good old chicken soup can help!



Oral hygiene

Dentists recommend a new toothbrush every 6 months, which means the number of toothbrushes your family tosses out can add up. If you want to focus on this waste, check out TerraCycle at [terracycle.com/en-US/brigades/colgate](https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/brigades/colgate) for recycling options for toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes, and plastic floss packaging. Check to see if any stores near you or anyone you know is already collecting these materials for recycling.

You can also find toothbrushes that are made from recycled or compostable materials. One option is Preserve toothbrushes, which are made from recycled yogurt cups and can be recycled through their mail-in program. You could also look for a compostable toothbrush made of wood or bamboo with plastic bristles. Pull out the bristles and compost the handle when you are finished with it. Make sure to only compost wood, bamboo, or certified compostable plastics.

You can also make toothpaste at home, or buy tooth powder in bulk or recyclable containers. Remember to buy ingredients in bulk using your own containers and to first test a small amount to see if you like it to avoid creating more waste.



Makeup

Reduce what you use

Packaging for cosmetics is often not recyclable because it is either too small for the sorting facilities to capture or composed of more than one material type. Plus cosmetics do expire, so having an extensive selection of makeup inevitably leads to waste. Reduce your cosmetic waste by simplifying what you use. For example, limit what you have on hand to one or two shades of products like eye liner, lipstick, or nail polish.

Make your own or use less-waste options

Making your own cosmetics eliminates packaging waste and reduces the number of ingredients for those with sensitivities. There are many DIY recipes online for lip stains and balms, mascara,

blush, and eyeliner. If DIY isn't your thing, buy products in reusable, recyclable or compostable packaging, including metal, cardboard and glass containers. Many brands offer refills for items like eyeshadow, foundation, and lipstick, which reduce waste and cost less. Additionally, some companies, including Aveda, Kiehl's, Lush, MAC Cosmetics and Origins, have packaging take-back programs.

Makeup removal

Skip the packaged facial wipes and cotton pads and use washable cloths or a natural sponge instead. Try using olive or coconut oil to aid in removal.

Replace disposables with reusables

There are many disposable bathroom items, from razors to bathroom cups to cotton swabs, and nearly all of them have an alternative option. Take a look throughout your bathroom and think about what items could be replaced with reusable alternatives.

Razors and shaving cream



Instead of purchasing fully disposable razors, use one where only the head or the blade is replaceable. These blades tend to last much longer than cheaper blades. Take an additional step and shave like your

grandparents by learning how to use a safety razor or straight edge blade.

There are also ways you can keep your blades sharper for longer – extending their lifespan. Sharpen your blades by following these steps:

- Start with a clean and dry razor and an old pair of jeans
- Place your jeans on a flat surface. Run your razor along your jeans (with the direction of the blades and not against the blades, you don't want to cut into the pants)
- Do this approximately 20 times with quick, short strokes using light pressure

Instead of shaving cream from an aerosol can, try using an olive-oil-based soap or specific shaving bar soap with a brush. You can also make your own shaving cream from bulk bin products (see the recipes section).

Feminine products



Swap out disposable pads and tampons with products such as menstrual cups or sponges, reusable pads, and/or period underwear. Reusable products are a safe alternative as long as you take care to clean the product as directed. These options are more expensive than disposables up front, but save significant money over time as you reuse them.

Tissues

Swap out paper tissues for cloth handkerchiefs, which you can store in your pocket, or keep a clean pile stocked in a central spot for the whole family to use.

Paper bathroom cups

If you use paper or disposable plastic cups, switch them out for reusable ones. Each family member can have a designated color or design. This saves money, and the only extra work is washing a cup or sticking them in the dishwasher.

Liquid soap

The pump dispenser of disposable liquid soap containers cannot be recycled, so buy soap in a bulk bottle (or in bulk with your own reusable container) and pour into your pump bottle. To reduce even more waste, consider switching from liquid soap in a bottle to a bar of soap, which will also help you avoid paying for one of the main ingredients in liquid soap – water.

Liquid shampoo

Although most shampoo bottles are recyclable, there are options to reduce or eliminate this waste. Think about using less shampoo per wash or washing your hair less often; your body may be producing more oil to replace what you wash out. If you wash your hair every day, try cutting back to every other day or less, and give your body time to adjust. If this doesn't work for you, consider using a dry shampoo or a shampoo that comes in bar form.. You can also try making your own shampoo – there are many recipes online.

Make your own

See recipes starting on page 50 for these bathroom items:

- Shaving cream
- Moisturizer
- Hair care alternatives
- Green cleaners



Laundry room



Laundry rooms are an easy place to reduce or eliminate waste because the materials you use to keep your clothes clean creates mostly recyclable plastic jugs or cardboard boxes, and whatever cannot be recycled is mostly avoidable. The one item of trash that will remain despite your best efforts is lint. Because most of us wear clothing made from synthetic materials like polyester, your lint must go in the trash. The only exception would be if you only wear clothing made from natural fibers like wool or cotton, in which case your lint could be composted.

Reduce packaging

Reduce packaging in the laundry room by purchasing concentrated laundry detergent in liquid or powder form. You can also reuse containers by buying laundry soap from bulk dispensers. Another cost-effective option is to make your own – see recipes starting on page 50.

Consider going without fabric softener. Many softeners include ingredients that can cause allergies, worsen asthma, or cause skin irritation. Simplify your product lineup by adding regular vinegar to the softener dispenser of your washing machine. Vinegar does double duty in the washer as it can also help brighten your clothes. And don't worry, the vinegar smell won't last. Avoid products containing bleach if possible or minimize your use of bleach as bleach is a hazardous chemical.

Replace disposables with reusables

Swap out dryer sheets for reusable dryer balls. You can buy some or make your own (search online for a variety of types). You can also avoid static by hanging your clothes to dry. If you like your clothing to have a scent, use a homemade linen spray or keep a sachet of flowers, herbs, or cedar in your dresser. You can also use pieces of cloth soaked in vinegar and essential oil as a dryer sheet replacement. They are easily stored in a glass jar to soak before and after the load of laundry is done drying. Just run them with a load and then put them back in the jar to be ready for the next use.

Extend the life of your clothing

Get the most out of your wardrobe by buying clothes that last and learning about washing settings, stain removal and mending clothes.

Buy high-quality clothing

View your clothing choices as an investment. Buying high-quality clothes that last a long time and can be repaired will be less expensive and create less waste in the long run. Try to avoid “fast fashion,” where current trends are manifested as inexpensive items that are often made poorly. Fabrics that wear out or tear and seams that unravel after just a few washes are hard to repair. Follow these tips to put together a wardrobe that passes the test of time.

- **Be intentional:** If you impulse buy because something is on sale, it can leave you with cheaply made clothes that don't fit well or go with anything you have. Avoid filling your closet with clothes that you barely wear. Ask yourself “Should I buy this? How will I feel about this six months from now?” and be honest.
- **Look for quality:** Go with brands that have a good reputation for durability or a lifetime warranty. Check the workmanship starting with the seams by gently pulling to see if the thread holds the fabric closely together and doesn't show gaps or pull apart. See that any buttons or fasteners are sewn on securely. Feel the fabric to see how thick it is. For example, a thicker cotton shirt will last longer than a very thin one.

A note on dry cleaning

Many chemicals in the dry-cleaning process can be dangerous to your health and to the environment. Try to buy clothing that doesn't require dry cleaning, hand wash your clothes when possible, or look for an environmentally friendly cleaner that uses the “wet cleaning” process. Professional wet cleaning is a water-based, non-toxic, energy-efficient technology that uses computer-controlled washers and dryers to get your clothing just as clean as it would be if otherwise dry cleaned. Check with your local dry cleaner to see if they offer wet cleaning rather than dry cleaning.

- **Buy versatile items:** It's worth spending more for items that you can wear in a variety of ways. Try to buy garments that go with others in your closet. Search online for terms such as "minimalist wardrobe" or "wardrobe staples" if you need inspiration on creating multiple looks with fewer pieces.
- **Shop reused:** If you're changing your wardrobe or need to keep costs low, look for clothing at garage sales, thrift stores, or from friends. You can often buy quality clothes secondhand for what you would spend on a new, less durable piece. This is an especially good option for anyone who is still growing or adults with changing bodies or professions.

Washing and drying

When you do get a new (or new-to-you) piece of clothing, check the tags for washing instructions. The instructions will include the temperature to wash and dry the clothes and if they should be put in the dryer at all. Improper heat and impact from tumbling in a dryer can break down your clothes prematurely.

When washing clothing, micropastics shed from synthetic fabrics like nylon and polyester. These microplastics are not filtered out and end up in our water. To reduce microplastics from clothing, consider buying clothing made from natural fibers like cotton and wool and reduce the frequency you wash your clothes.

If you have a foldable rack or laundry line, use them to air dry as much as possible. Use cold water to preserve the fibers and color, and try not to wash your clothes if they do not need it. Unless it is soiled or stinky, you may be able to air out your clothing and wear an item a few times before it goes into the laundry.

Removing stains

If you spill, act quickly to clean it for best results. There are several options for removing stains with simple ingredients that can be purchased in bulk. Be sure to test fabrics in an unseen area before treating the stains, and take special care on delicate fabrics like wool, silk or suede.

Try the following to remove stains:

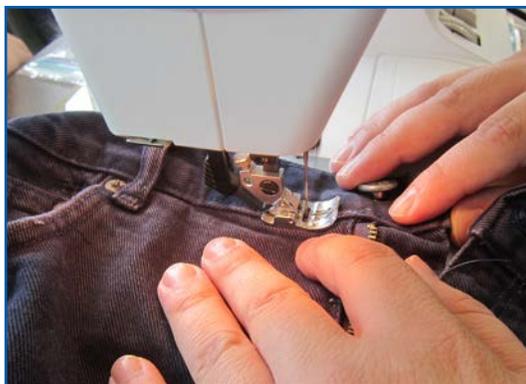
- **Baking soda and vinegar:** Works as a general stain remover. Rinse stain with lukewarm water and soak in a vinegar/water solution for up to half an hour before putting in the washer. You can also mix a paste of vinegar and baking soda to put on the stain.
- **Hydrogen peroxide:** Use for grass, blood, coffee, and wine. Dab or spray peroxide on stain and let it sit for 15 minutes before rinsing and laundering. This may bleach colors if left on too long.
- **Freezer:** if you have gum stuck to clothing, try freezing it for several hours then breaking it off

Heat from dryers can set stains, so make sure that the stain is gone before putting it in the dryer. Or consider using the power of the sun to dry and whiten clothing. Sunshine can help fade stains on light or white fabrics.

Another easy option is to designate a pair of "work clothes" that you don't mind staining, and always wear these for especially messy jobs like doing yard work or painting.

Mending

It is often cheaper to repair clothing than to buy a replacement piece. To mend your clothing, search for a video online, take your clothes to a tailor, or attend a monthly Fix-it Clinic where you can be guided through the repair



Disposing of clothing

When your clothes are at the end of their life, you can cut and reuse the fabric for rags, or the fibers can be recycled for use as fillers or carpet padding. Ask your local reuse retailer that accepts clothing for donation if they will accept unwearable clothing for textile recycling, or bring the clothing to a Hennepin County drop-off facility.

Make your own

See a recipe on page 57 for laundry detergent you can make at home.

Kids



From diapers to growth spurts to moving out for college or a career, kids can create a lot of waste at every stage of life. Luckily, just like in any other aspect of your life, you can also find ways to minimize this waste.

New baby

While manufacturers and marketers want you to believe there is an endless array of items that you need to welcome your new baby, there are few truly essential baby products. Some examples of nonessential items and alternatives include:

- **Baby care timers:** Skip the expense and use a pen and piece of paper or apps like Total Baby and Baby Geek (there may be a small fee). These serve the same purpose at a fraction of the cost.
- **Baby food processor:** A regular food processor or blender will do the exact same thing as the baby version, and you can use it long after your little one is off baby food.
- **Baby laundry detergent:** Choosing a regular “free and clear” product or making your own will save you money and time because you can throw the baby’s laundry in with the rest of the family’s dirty clothes. See the recipes section for a laundry detergent recipe.
- **Bottle drying rack:** A regular dish rack works just fine without the additional expense and counter space.
- **Changing table:** if you’d like a changing area, secure a changing pad onto a low dresser, which you can continue to use after your child is out of diapers.
- **Crib bumpers:** Go without bumpers. According to the U.S. Product Safety

Commission, crib bumpers have caused a number of death and injuries in babies 2 years old or younger. The study found that many infants lack the motor development needed to free themselves when they become wedged between the bumper pad and another surface. If the pads are too soft, the baby’s nose or face can get pressed up against it, causing suffocation. If they are too firm, the baby can climb up on the pads and fall out of the crib.

- **Diaper bag:** Although you will need something to carry your child’s essentials around in, it doesn’t need to be a bag specifically designed as a diaper bag. A backpack, messenger bag or large purse will do the trick, is more likely to match your personal style, and is more useful in the long run.
- **Diaper disposal system:** If you empty your trash regularly, a regular household trash can will do. For poopy diapers, flush the solid waste down the toilet to get rid of the main source of bad smells. If using cloth diapers, rinse and store them in a bucket with a vinegar and water solution until laundering time.
- **Wipe warmer:** You can sufficiently warm wipes with your hands a few seconds before using, or use warm water with a reusable wipe to avoid the added expense of a wipe warmer and the electricity it requires.

This list is by no means exhaustive. When assessing whether an item is needed, consider whether you already have items that will serve the same purpose. If you really feel you need an item, consider getting it used and pass it on to someone else to use when you are done.

Most reuse retailers, including Arc's Value Village, Goodwill and Salvation Army, will not accept or sell certain baby equipment such as car seats, cribs and strollers due to product safety standards. If you are considering getting these items used, be sure to check models for recalls and research recommendations for product lifespan as it relates to safety. For example, the Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends against using cribs that are older than 10 years. Remember that there are lots of ways to reduce waste with a new baby without compromising their safety.

Diapers

Cloth diapers have come a long way in the past 10 years. Gone are the pins and oversized plastic pants, replaced by a dizzying array of styles and designs. In fact, they are now as easy to put on your child as their disposable counterparts and arguably much more stylish. Cloth diapers do need to be washed, so they are without a doubt more work for parents than tossing a disposable.

So why consider cloth diapering? First, they save money. The average family spends \$3,000 to \$4,000 per child on disposable diapers. Cloth diapers have a one-time cost of \$100 to \$1,500, depending on the style. Cloth diapers can be used for multiple children, so a family can easily save thousands of dollars by switching to cloth. Second, they are low-waste. For families with kids using disposable diapers, about 50 percent of their weekly trash consists of disposable diapers. So although using reusable diapers is definitely a commitment, it has significant benefits. Additionally, cloth diapers have resale value, so many people regain part of their investment by selling them when they are no longer needed.

For information on where to buy cloth diapers, what styles work best and cloth diapering troubleshooting, visit the local blog clothdiaperguru.blogspot.com.

“My family lived in a 6-unit building with shared laundry when our son was born. We wanted to use cloth diapers without grossing out all of the other residents in the building, so we came up with a system of presoaking the diapers in our apartment before they were laundered. Rather than collect a big pile of diapers in a diaper bin, we used a 5 gallon pail to presoak the diapers in a water and vinegar solution. Not only did this pre-clean the diapers a bit, it also cut back on the smells typical of storing them in a diaper pail. We also rinsed the dirty diapers prior to soaking them. Once we’d collected a bucket full, we dumped them all in the tub, rung them out and then took them down to the laundry to wash them. Cloth diapering was definitely more work than disposable, but it’s far cheaper in the long run, especially if you have more than one kid. And you’ll never have to worry about running out late in the night to buy a pack of diapers when you realize you’ve run out” – dad in Minneapolis



Toys

When purchasing toys, check thrift stores, garage sales and online exchanges for gently used toys, and remember to pass them on to someone else for reuse when your child is done playing with them. Focus on durable toys that won't break easily, and always be aware of which toys have batteries and can't go in the trash. Remember, if a toy emits lights, sound, or drives without winding up, it has a battery. Remove or replace batteries in these toys when they stop working. It may be easiest to avoid these toys as sometimes you can't access the battery and keep the toy intact.



Consider joining a toy library, such as the Minneapolis Toy Library (mplstoylibrary.org), to reduce waste, prevent clutter and save money. Being a member of the toy library means your kids will get new toys every few weeks that match their development stage.

Back to school

Back-to-school time can be hectic and expensive. But luckily, new-to-you clothing and school supplies can often be purchased without compromising quality or style.

Before school starts, get a list of needed school supplies from your child's school. Reuse any supplies that you have left over from the previous year. Be sure to take a list with you for any remaining supplies to avoid buying items you don't need. Look for items made with recycled content, durable materials and those that come in little or no packaging. If the item does come packaged, choose items with recyclable packaging.

For older students, look for required books at libraries, used book stores and online resellers. Some college bookstores also offer used books, which can be a big savings for college-bound kids. For computers and tablets, consider buying refurbished ones.

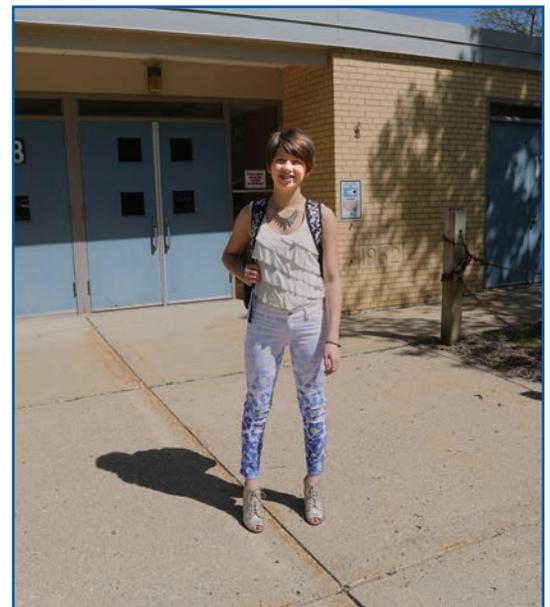
Clothes

Babies and kids grow quickly, and all too often those boots you bought on sale last spring end up not fitting when winter comes. Finding gently used clothes at secondhand stores, garage sales, online sale sites or getting them from friends and family will save money and prevent waste. And, once your kids outgrow them, you can pass them on to someone else to reuse.

Remember to fix items such as small tears, missing buttons and broken zippers. Visit a Hennepin County Fix-It Clinic for free assistance with mending. Find information at hennepin.us/fixitclinic.

"The knees of my son's pants are inevitably worn through by the end of the school year. Rather than pitch them, I cut the legs off at the knee for instant shorts – saves me money and allows us to get more wear out of them. I recycle the cut off legs and the remaining shorts when they are too small by dropping them off with my textile recycling."

– Minneapolis resident



Low-waste lunches

There are lots of alternatives to packaged convenience foods that are lower cost, lower waste and often healthier. These options can be incorporated into lunches for grown-ups as well.

Pack lunches, including sandwiches and snacks, in reusable containers rather than plastic bags. Choose durable bottles for drinks and fill them with tap water or other beverages. Include reusable forks, spoons and cloth napkins. Try to avoid these common prepackaged convenience foods: bottled water, candy, chips, fruit snacks, granola bars, individually wrapped snacks, juice boxes, Lunchables™ or similar boxed lunches, microwaveable frozen meals, packaged sandwiches, squeezable fruit pouches and smoothies, and yogurt.

Involve your kids in making their lunches. Not only will this cut down on the work for you, but they will be more likely to eat something they have helped create. Make enough food for several lunches at one time, or make lunches the night before to avoid running out of time in the morning.

Encourage your family to bring home any food in their lunch they didn't eat to have later. Serve leftover food as snacks, incorporate into new meals or send it again the next day for lunch.

For ideas on what to pack and containers to pack it in, visit a blog such as 100 Days of Real Food at 100daysofrealfood.com/school-lunches.



“When my son gets home from school and asks for a snack, we first check his lunch and have him eat whatever he skipped before we offer him more food. If fruit or veggies get brown or mushy from sitting in his lunch all day, we set them aside for smoothies, stir-fries or roasted veggies. If my son isn’t hungry, we often include what’s left in his lunch on his plate at dinner. This ensures he eats healthy and we prevent wasted food.” – mom from St. Louis Park

Pets



Owning a pet can create a lot of waste from packaging in addition to all the waste pets create themselves. However, there are steps you can take to reduce the amount of waste associated with having an animal companion.

Food

A low-waste option is to make your own food for cats and dogs, although this can be quite time-consuming. You can use meat and bones from local producers and grow vegetables in your yard or buy locally grown produce. Making your own food greatly reduces packaging waste, and will almost always be of higher quality than what you can find in a commercial food. This means it will be more digestible and your pet will produce less waste.

Although cats and dogs can eat vegetables and grains, cats need meat as their main nutrient source. There are a lot of articles to help you decide if this is the right choice for you and your pet. Many website have recipes and information on the pros and cons. Check out:

- feline-nutrition.org/nutrition/making-raw-cat-food-for-do-it-yourselfers
- thebark.com/content/should-you-put-your-dog-raw-food-diet

If you don't want to make your own food, try a grain-free food that you buy at a pet food store. In most cases this will be highly digestible for your cat or dog, which means less waste in the litter box or in your yard. Buy larger bags or containers to cut down on packaging waste.

Treats

You can make your own treats to cut down on packaging waste. There are many options online. Search for homemade treats for both cats and dogs; one place to start is simplypets.com. You can also grow your own catnip for your feline and air dry it for storage (bonnieplants.com/growing/growing-catnip/)

Pet waste

Look for cat litter made from pine, cedar, wheat, newspaper or corn rather than clay, which must be mined. Plain sawdust is also a cheap and effective option that utilizes an otherwise wasted resource. Cat litter should go in the trash - there is no good alternative. It is not compostable, and it is not recommended to flush litter (even if it says natural or flushable) as that can clog pipes.

Bedding such as pine and newspaper from herbivores including alpacas, chinchillas, hamsters, horses, gerbils, guinea pigs, mice, and rabbits can be composted in your backyard bin.

Dog waste (but not the bag you picked it up in) may be flushed down the toilet. Don't buy new plastic bags to pick up or collect your pet waste – reuse old bread bags, food-soiled zipper bags, or other soft plastic bags like newspaper bags or skip the bags altogether and use a scooper to pick up your dog's waste.

If none of these options work for you, the proper disposal of pet waste is in the trash.

Gear

You can look for food and water bowls, leashes, kennels, toys and beds that are gently used on online sale and sharing sites like Pet Garage (petgarage.com), Craigslist or NextDoor or at your local animal shelter if they sell used pet products that have been donated. You can also make your own pet bed and toys out of surplus or repurposed materials. Making your own allows you to customize them and save money. Here's a website with a few examples: tipnut.com/pet-beds

If you'd like to build an outdoor enclosure for your cat so they can safely get sunshine and fresh air, think about building your own or having a handy person build it with used building materials such as wood and screens or repurposed items such as ramps and enclosures. Find some design ideas at paws.org/library/cats/home-life/outdoor-enclosures/

Sources of used building materials include:

- Habitat for Humanity ReStore
- Better Futures Minnesota ReUse Warehouse



Grooming

Avoid the special pet shampoo by using a castile soap such as Dr. Bronner's diluted with water to wash your dog. Frequent baths will dry out your dog's skin, so try not to wash them any more than necessary.

As an alternative to chemical flea repellents and treatments, you can try natural remedies that will also avoid the plastic packaging. Learn more at mnn.com/family/pets/stories/7-natural-flea-remedies-cats-and-dogs.

"My cat is perfectly happy with toys like crumpled newspaper balls, cardboard boxes, old feathers, and even a stretched-out wire from a notebook binding. It's great to just recycle or compost these things when she's done with them. She is also a big fan of two homemade toys: a crocheted ball with something crinkly inside and a little fleece pillow with catnip. You don't need to buy the whole pet store aisle of plastic toys that are ultimately trash." – Pet owner from Mound

Travel and on-the-go



Travel and being on-the-go takes you out of your normal routine, but you can still practice your low-waste habits by planning ahead.

Be prepared while on the go – assemble a zero waste kit



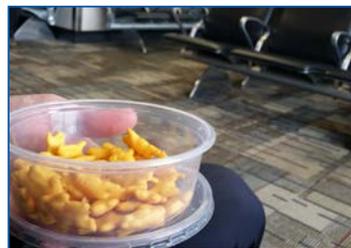
Even if you are mastering low-waste actions at home, you may find that your best intentions can fall apart when you are on-the-go and unprepared. One simple solution is to assemble a zero waste kit. This will help you be prepared to avoid waste no matter where you are.

Here's what your kit could contain. It may seem like a lot, but most of these items can be nestled together, and you probably already have many of the items that you'll need. Remember to add more items for additional family members or friends.

- A small bag to store the contents
- Cloth napkin
- Spoon and fork (or spork to save room!)
- A lightweight plate or bowl
- Drink containers (canning jars, water bottles, thermos, or reusable plastic cups work well)
- A few reusable containers or storage bags for snacks or to pack up leftovers

Reduce packaging waste and disposables

Pack your own snacks and beverages in lightweight reusable bags or containers to avoid over-packaged convenience foods. Some easy-to-pack, low-waste items are fruits, veggies, sandwiches, bulk trail mix and nuts. Skip the convenience stores if you need to restock and instead find a local grocery store and shop the perimeter or bulk foods section if they have one. Try using the Zero Waste Home bulk locator app at zerowastehome.com/app to find options wherever you are.



Include reusable essentials when you pack, such as small bags for purchases, reusable containers and cups or bottles, cloth napkins, and lightweight utensils. For hygiene products, such as soap and shampoo, use refillable containers instead of buying new travel-sized products. If using disposable bottles

or containers is unavoidable, don't throw them in the trash. If there isn't an accessible recycling bin, hang on to them until you can locate one.

Entertainment and souvenirs



Bringing your own books or e-readers and tablets cuts down on impulse magazine and newspaper purchases. For souvenirs, resist the cheap knickknacks and instead purchase durable items like clothing or books or consumables like wine or foods that are representative of the trip. Take pictures of the places you

visit, and consider writing a travel journal to remember your experiences later rather than filling your home (or friends' homes) with things.

Flying

Air travel has a few special tips and considerations. If you can, save a copy of your ticket to your smartphone before getting to the airport. Check the airport beforehand to see if they accommodate e-ticketing. For carry-on luggage, your prepacked snacks should clear security as long as they aren't liquids or gels. Decline snacks and meals offered on the plane to avoid the excess packaging. Bring your own headphones instead of purchasing airline headsets, which aren't made to last. For TSA packing guidelines, visit [tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring](https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring).

Camping



Cooking outdoors and unreliable refrigeration can lead to extra food waste while camping if you are not careful. Plan out your meals for the duration of your trip and pack perishable food wisely. To save time, prepare some of your ingredients ahead of time at home, which also allows you to compost or recycle any packaging or food scraps so you don't have to think about it during your trip.



To keep your food from spoiling without refrigeration, bring a reusable cooler with ice packs, or for longer stays, refresh your ice regularly (don't forget to recycle the bag once it has dried out). Try not to bring more fresh food than you can eat up in a few days. Once packed, don't open the cooler more than necessary, and make sure to store all of your food

in water-tight containers to prevent soggy foods and cross-contamination. If possible, keep separate, smaller coolers for meat and beverages, and keep your coolers in the shade and not inside a hot car. For more tips on how to pack a cooler, visit [100daysofrealfood.com/how-to-pack-a-cooler-safely-real-food-tips](https://www.100daysofrealfood.com/how-to-pack-a-cooler-safely-real-food-tips).



Bring a large water cooler and/or personal water bottles rather than packing bottled water. Skip the disposables and bring reusable plates or bowls, cups, and utensils. If you plan meals for hiking, on-the-go, or plan to eat out, pack items in reusable containers. Instead of paper towels, napkins or towelettes, bring a set of old towels in different sizes—you can hang them on a line to dry them in between uses. Two bungee cords braided together and stretched between trees makes an easy-to-pack clothesline that doesn't need clothes pins – hang items by tucking their corners between the two braided cords.

Avoid cooking in aluminum foil, and instead opt for cooking irons or a designated set of cast iron pans or regular kitchen pots and pans that can handle rough use. And although cooking over an open fire can be part of the adventure, hot flames can often result in burnt foods. Choose a camp stove for more reliable meal results, especially with main courses.

For dishwashing, bring reusable tubs, scrub brushes and dish towels. Make sure to dispose of your greywater (from dish tub and handwashing) according to the policies of the campground or natural area.

For gear, opt for well-made, durable equipment and reusable options whenever possible. If you're just starting out or concerned about price, borrow from friends or consider renting some of the basics from outfitters like Hoigaard's, REI, or the University of Minnesota Center for Outdoor Adventure.

Campers live by the principle of "leave no trace." In a low-waste world, that means pick up, separate and dispose of all your waste properly. Some campgrounds only have trash collection, so plan ahead to pack out your recyclables and food scraps. A good place to store organic waste is in your emptied food containers inside of the cooler. When the trip is over and you are back home, take any hazardous wastes like empty fuel tanks and old rechargeable batteries to a drop-off location.

Home office



If you have a home office, you probably have items like paper, office supplies, or electronics to dispose of. You can often reduce or donate items from this area of your home, too.

Reduce paper waste

Try to reduce the amount of paper you get in the mail, and don't print things like emails or driving directions if you can safely access them on a device. Practice paper reduction habits such as switching your printer default to double-sided printing, using single-sided pages again if you're only printing one page, and using scrap paper for notes instead of buying new pads of stationery.

Junk mail

To reduce junk mail, the first step is prevention. Be cautious with how often you share your contact information, and make a habit of reading privacy policies. Check online for services that will get you off of national mailing lists. You can also check the piece of mail for instructions on unsubscribing. For example, Yellow Pages has directions on how to opt out of receiving their phone book. For more in-depth steps on reducing your junk mail, see the Hold the Mail brochure at hennepin.us/-/media/hennepinus/business/work-with-hennepin-county/environmental-literature/hold-the-mail.

Bills

Instead of getting paper bills, switch to online statements and bill paying. Just remember to practice safe password habits. Create a strong, memorable password and change it regularly to keep your information secure. If you have trouble remembering passwords, you can use an app that stores them so you don't have a paper copy sitting around for someone to find.

Shredded paper

Be mindful of the paper that you are shredding. Shredded paper is a nuisance at recycling sorting facilities because even bagged shredded paper can break open and fly off of sorting belts or contaminate other recycling streams. Only shred when it is absolutely necessary. Go paperless when possible, or cut out the confidential portion of a document and recycle the rest. For the paper you do want to shred, it's best to bring it to a community shredding event, take it to a business that will shred and destroy your documents (usually for a fee), put it in your backyard compost bin, or include it with your organics recycling. Paper shredded at an event or business is delivered directly to a paper recycler, avoiding the issues at recycling sorting facilities. The following businesses will shred and destroy your documents for a fee:

- FedEx
- Office Depot
- Shred Nations
- Staples

Office supplies and electronics

There are many options for office supplies and electronics. Recycle or refill used ink cartridges, and donate usable supplies to school programs or nonprofits. Try to reuse small items like paper clips, rubber bands, binder clips and portfolios. When your printer or computer dies or you buy a new one, recycle your old one at a retailer that accepts used electronics or at a drop-off facility. You can also often replace components with upgraded versions instead of replacing the whole thing. Volunteers at Fix-It Clinics may be able to help you fix or rebuild many different electronic gadgets.

Cleaning around the house



Consolidate your cleaners and reduce packaging at the same time by changing the mindset that every cleaning job requires a different cleaning product.

Basic cleaning supplies

Many common household products can make effective and inexpensive cleaners. Use the following products to clean your house from top to bottom.

- Baking soda
- Lemon or lime juice
- Washing soda
- White vinegar
- Non-scratch scrub sponge
- Drain snake
- Pumice stone

Make your own cleaners

You can make a simple all-purpose cleaner by combining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white vinegar with water in a 16 ounce spray bottle. Then add $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons non-antibacterial liquid dish soap. Add lemon juice if desired.

Find additional recipes in the Green Cleaning Guide at hennepin.us/residents/recycling-hazardous-waste/reduce-household-hazardous-waste.

Replace disposables with reusables

Choose durable, not disposable, for the following items: toilet brushes, mops, dusters, cleaning cloths, wipes, and more! Old cut-up shirts or regular washcloths can replace most disposable cleaning tools you have in your home. Microfiber cleaning cloths are also highly effective for capturing dust and leaving surfaces streak-free.



Garage, lawn and garden



Taking care of your car and your yard can result in a lot of waste that is not recyclable and may be hazardous. Garages can also become a storage locker for all of the “stuff” that doesn’t have a place inside the house. However, you can reduce your impact by keeping your automobiles and miscellaneous yard-care equipment in good shape and choosing greener options for yard care.

Green auto tips

Fix leaks

Keep an eye on the ground underneath your vehicle and make sure to have leaks fixed. If you do have an oil spill, avoid chemical cleaners by using clay cat litter to soak up the oil. If you want to remove the stain, use dish soap and a small amount of hot water. Be sure to absorb the oily liquid and put it in a container. Oil and gasoline soaked rags and absorbents should be stored in a small, airtight, non-combustible (such as metal) container with a tight-fitting lid. An old paint can is a good example. The sealed can should be disposed of at a Hennepin County drop-off facility.

Changing your oil

If you change your oil at home, bring used oil and filters to a local auto shop for recycling. Store your used oil in a clearly labeled plastic container with a tight fitting cap. You can also bring used oil to a Hennepin County drop-off facility. Never put your used oil, filters, or oil-soaked cloths in the trash. See the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's earth-friendly tips for changing your own oil at pca.state.mn.us/living-green/changing-your-oil-earth-friendly-guide-do-it-yourselfers.

When you buy oil for an oil change, look for re-refined (aka recycled) oil. To guarantee this oil has the same specifications as virgin oil, look for the API Certification mark.

Washing your car

The best way to clean your car is to bring it to a car wash. Car wash facilities are required by law to treat dirty water before it is released into systems that enter lakes, streams and rivers. They also tend to use less water per wash than a person using a hose. If you do wash your car at home, make sure to do it on the lawn, dirt or gravel so that the soap and greasy grime doesn't run directly into your neighborhood storm drains.

Cleaning the interior

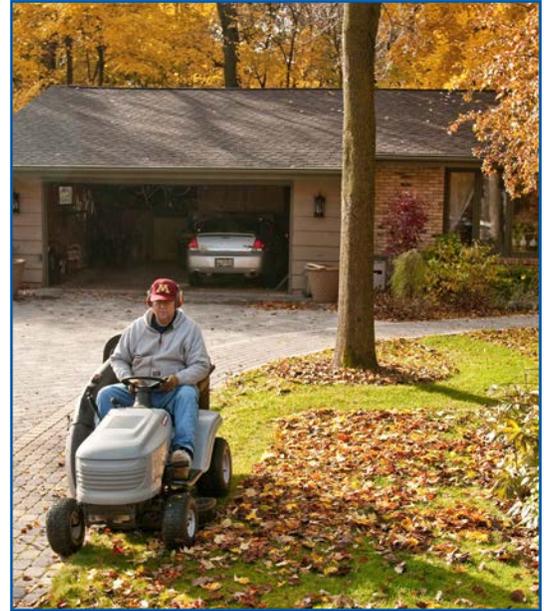
To clean and refresh carpets and upholstery, sprinkle on baking soda and let it set for at least 30 minutes before vacuuming it up. Wipe down internal surfaces with a damp cloth and skip the chemical detailing products.



Reduce waste in the garage

Take the following steps to prevent waste in your garage:

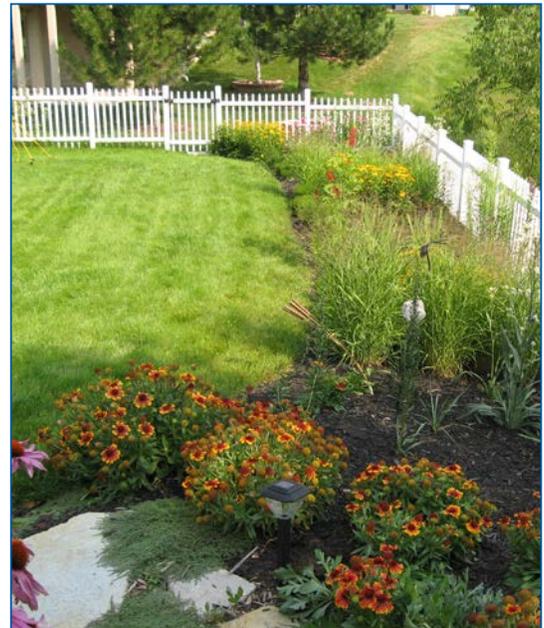
- Donate or sell old or unused items like bikes, tools, plant containers, and sports equipment your kids have outgrown so you don't end up throwing them away many years down the road when they might be obsolete.
- Keep cars, motorcycles, lawn mowers, and other lawn equipment with engines tuned up so they last a long time without needing to be replaced.
- Share tools with your neighbors or become a member of a tool library. The Minnesota Tool Library has a variety of tools available for its members to borrow. Learn more at mntoollibrary.org.
- Plan for winter by draining and bringing in hoses so they don't burst, covering or storing lawn furniture so it doesn't fade or crack, and making sure you don't let any chemicals or paints stored in the garage freeze.



Reduce hazardous lawn chemicals

You can pull weeds by hand or use vinegar to kill plants growing in your sidewalk or driveway cracks. You can also use compost to fertilize gardens. To keep a low-waste lawn, check out the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's guide to reducing pesticides and fertilizers. Some tips include letting your lawn grow a little higher, keeping mower blades sharp, leaving grass clippings on the lawn, and watering less often but more deeply (see www.pca.state.mn.us/living-green/grow-healthy-no-waste-lawn-and-garden for in-depth information). You may want to even consider turning over part of the lawn to garden space if grass doesn't do particularly well in your location.

Avoid poisons, pesticides and fertilizers when at all possible, and make sure that you read labels for proper storage. Remember to keep all hazardous products out of reach of children and animals. Keep products in the original containers and make sure the labels and safety information are legible. Cloths soaked in oil, gasoline, oil-based stain and varnish, turpentine, linseed oil, or other hazardous materials should be collected in a tight fitting, nonflammable container and taken to a Hennepin County drop-off facility. See the How to identify and reduce hazardous chemicals in your home guide at hennepin.us/residents/recycling-hazardous-waste/reduce-household-hazardous-waste for more details.



Home remodeling and moving



Home remodeling can be a big source of waste. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, it accounts for 22 percent of all the construction and demolition waste generated nationally. However, with a plan and a little extra time, much of that waste can be avoided or diverted for reuse or recycling.

Reduce

Less is more. Smaller homes generate less waste over a lifetime of use and maintenance. Spend more per square foot on higher-quality materials and finishes instead of maximizing the total square footage of your project. The website notsobighouse.com is a great resource for designing spaces that are not as big as you thought you needed to perfectly suit the way you live. Skip the latest must-haves and stick to simple, classic designs and finishes that endure over time.

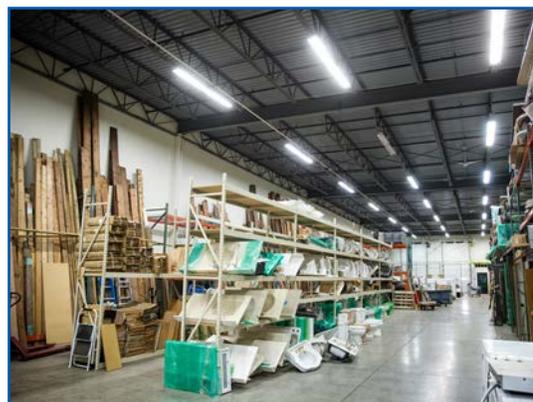
If you aren't able to reuse what you already have, you can still incorporate reuse into your project by buying used. Cabinets, flooring, sinks, light fixtures and much more can be found at used building material stores across the metro. Architectural Antiques, Bauer Brothers Salvage, Better Futures Minnesota, City Salvage, Guided Salvage, Habitat for Humanity ReStore and Professional Rebuilding Outlet are all good options for used and period-specific building materials. Craigslist, eBay and online garage sale groups are also good options for finding used or surplus building materials. Search the Choose to Reuse website at hennepin.us/choosetoreuse for home improvement and repair organizations close to you, or check the event listing for upcoming sales.



Reuse

Many furnishings and finishes can be reused rather than trashed. For example, cabinets and vanities can take on a new life with a fresh coat of paint or stain and new hardware. Sinks and tubs can be refreshed by replacing the faucet rather than the entire sink. Not only will you reduce waste by reusing, you'll also save money.

Donation and deconstruction



In addition to selling used building materials, many of the home improvement retailers also accept donations, and some offer pick-up service. Make sure you share your reuse plans with your contractor so items aren't destroyed during removal.

Better Futures Minnesota also offers deconstruction services, which is a process that carefully takes a building apart to preserve the materials for reuse. This method can be used rather than demolition for both partial and full building removal. Deconstruction takes longer and costs more, but tax credits for donating the building materials help reduce the cost, and this method can divert as much as 85 to 90 percent of the building material.

Recycling

After you've exhausted your reduction and reuse options, there are recycling opportunities for many materials. The gold standard for recycling construction and demolition debris is to sort the materials onsite and then have them sent to the various processors of those materials. If your site only has room for a mixed-waste dumpster, make sure the dumpster is going to one of three processors in the Twin Cities that divert materials for recycling: Broadway Resource Recovery (Atomic), DemCon or Veit. These recycling processors take mixed construction and demolition waste, sort it, and divert 60 to 70 percent of the material from landfills. Let your contractor know before work starts that you want the material recycled at one of these three places, and ask for the receipts to ensure it went where you specified.



Prevent waste while moving

Be organized while moving to prevent waste. Make sure to give yourself plenty of time to sort through things to avoid feeling overwhelmed. When moving, use reusable or recyclable packing materials such as reusable bags or crates or used cardboard boxes. Use items such as towels, blankets or clothing for padding delicate items. Recycle or donate as much as you can instead of tossing it in the trash. When you move in, properly dispose of any items the previous tenants left behind, and choose to buy used household goods or furniture instead of new for your new place



Learn more

For additional resources on low-waste and green remodeling, visit pca.state.mn.us/quick-links/residential-building.

Special events



A lot of waste can be created at celebrations and gatherings. For example, household waste increases by 25 percent during the holiday season. Nationally, an additional one million tons of waste per week is generated during the holidays. But, it is possible to have special events such as holidays, birthdays, graduation parties, retirement parties and weddings and still avoid waste.

Planning tips

High-waste	Low-waste
Sending paper invites.	→ Invite people via email or phone.
Cooking massive amounts of food.	→ Plan carefully and only cook enough food for the people coming. Use Save the Food's Guestimator tool to help you plan: savethefood.com/guestimator
Throwing out leftovers.	→ Send leftovers home with guests and save for later in the refrigerator or freezer.
Using disposable plates, cups, bowls and utensils.	→ Use reusable dishware and utensils.
Buying new games for attendees to play.	→ Rent inflatable or large carnival-type games for kids. Ask attendees to bring their own games to share.
Having trash cans scattered around the event space.	→ Clearly mark all trash and recycling containers, and always keep them next to each other.
Using single-use, disposable decorations like balloons and banners	→ Decorate with items that can be reused, recycled or composted, are made from used or recycled materials, or given to guests to take home.

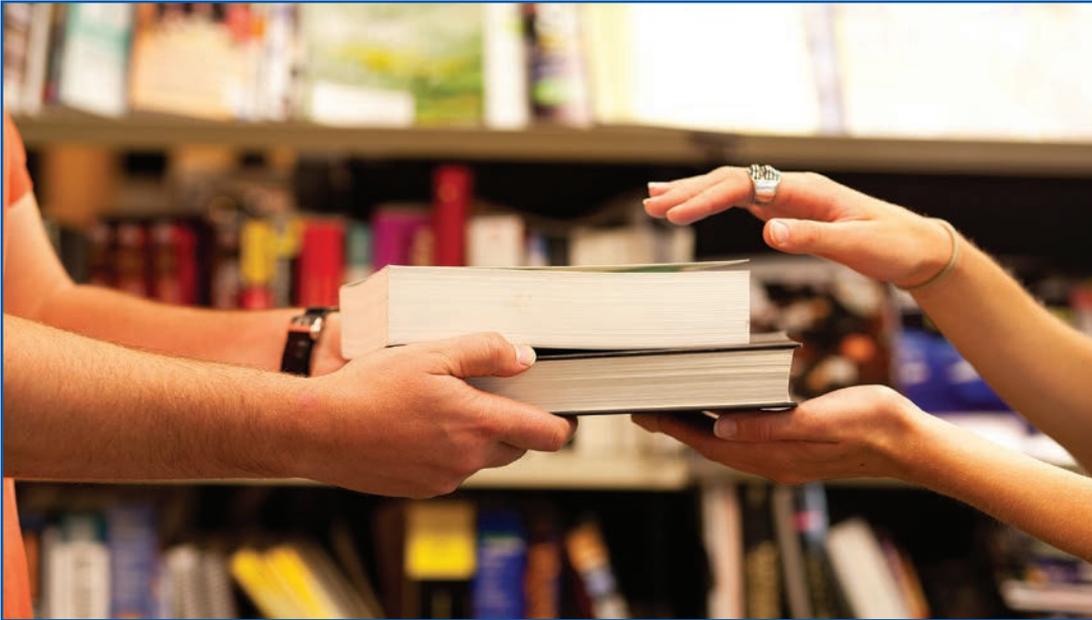
Find more tips for planning green events in the green party planning checklist at hennepin.us/-/media/hennepinus/business/work-with-hennepin-county/environmental-education-activities/reducing-waste-appendix-green-party-checklist.pdf

If you are holding a larger gathering or event, get tips for reducing waste and recycling at hennepin.us/eventrecycling.

"For National Night Out, my block started providing recycling and organics bins. But after seeing all the paper plates and plastic cups that were used, I encouraged my neighbors to bring their own reusable dishes and cups to the event to reduce the waste we generated."

– Homeowner in south Minneapolis

Zero-waste lifestyle



This section includes more advanced tips on creating a low-waste and environmentally friendly lifestyle that goes beyond the creation and management of solid waste. These lifestyle tips take into account the upstream impact of product manufacturing, energy use, and water consumption.

Hobbies and gifts

To reduce giving gifts that someone will never use, give gifts of experiences instead of things. Some examples include tickets to a play, movie, concert, or sports game. You could also buy someone a membership to a museum, or take them out for a special meal at their favorite restaurant.

Instead of buying a new book, check one out from a Hennepin County library. It will also save space on your bookshelf.

Focus your family time on activities instead of toys and electronics. Many activities can be free or inexpensive, and you'll spend more quality time together. Explore parks, play sports, cook a low-waste meal, or walk the dog. Check out local calendars for seasonal activities like music or movies in the parks.

Low-maintenance yards

The way we care for our yards makes a difference, and implementing sustainable landscaping techniques can save money and time, protect our health and benefit the environment. A healthy, vigorous lawn needs less watering and

less maintenance. Instead of grass, plant natives that benefit pollinators and beautify your yard. There are also ground covers and sedges that can be planted that require low or no mowing.

Start a garden and eat local



Growing your own produce is a great way to reduce packaging and ensure that your fruits and veggies are grown without pesticides. If you don't have a yard or an area big enough for a garden, you can get a plot at a community garden. Ask your neighbors or explore your neighborhood resources to find a garden near you.

Another way to reduce the impact of your meals is to eat local foods that are in season.

This reduces the carbon emissions generated by transporting foods across the globe. Here are some examples of cookbooks to help get you started:

- Eating Local by Sur La Table
- Edible: A Celebration of Local Foods by Tracey Ryder and Carole Topalian
- Mark Bittman's Kitchen Express – 404 inspired seasonal dishes you can make in 20 minutes or less by Mark Bittman

Start your kids off on the right foot by teaching them to cook and enjoy more foods. This can help you prevent food waste, avoid unhealthy packaged foods, and set a good example.

Join the sharing economy

The sharing economy is a growing movement for people to connect and share resources rather than everyone buying their own. The following are some ways to join the sharing economy.

Transportation

Reduce your vehicle usage by biking, taking mass transit, or participating in a car sharing program.

Some car and bike sharing programs in the Twin Cities include:

- Hourcar (hourcar.org) and Zipcar (zipcar.com): Think of Hourcar and Zipcar for your longer trips (such as going to an appointment, to dinner, or for errands). These car services are also great for your runs to local stores to buy larger items or trips out of the cities.
- Nice Ride (niceridemn.org): If you don't have your own bike, use the Nice Ride program when biking around Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Tools

Become a member of a tool library. The Minnesota Tool Library has a variety of tools available for its members to borrow. Learn more at mntoolibrary.org.

Toys



Getting your kids involved by participating in a toy borrowing or swapping program. The Minneapolis Toy Library is a lending program in which member families can borrow toys that are geared towards children from birth to 5 years old. Learn more at mplstoylibrary.org

Use your social networks

Get to know your neighbors through Nextdoor, neighborhood Facebook groups, and events like National Night Out. You can also join specific interest groups focused on things like buy nothing or gardening. Use the people you know as resources for borrowing, lending, and selling things like home goods or clothing.

Conserve water and energy

Another great way to reduce your carbon footprint is to use water and energy more efficiently. The Center for Energy and Environment offers home energy audits in many communities in Hennepin County. Learn more at homeenergysquad.net.

Find water conservation tips from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency at pca.state.mn.us/living-green/conserving-water.

Learn how to protect water and read stories of what others are doing cleanwatermn.org.

Create change in your community

By sharing your story, you can inspire others and bring changes to your workplace, place of worship, or kids' school.

Tell your family, friends and neighbors what you are doing. If people ask, explain the low-waste lifestyle changes you are trying to make. Start a blog (see examples in additional resources), share on social media, or offer to speak to a community group.

Hennepin County has programs to help:

- Hennepin County Master Recycler/Composters are trained volunteers that advocate for the 3Rs in their community by setting up or improving waste diversion efforts and educating others. Learn more at hennepin.us/masterrecyclers.
- Business and school recycling grants are available to help you set up recycling and organics programs as well as other waste reduction efforts. Learn more at hennepin.us/businessrecycling or hennepin.us/schoolrecycling.
- Environmental education grants are available to organizations to educate, engage and empower residents to make positive environmental changes in their daily lives. Topics include waste reduction and recycling, energy conservation, protecting land and water, reducing and properly disposing of hazardous waste, and improving air and water quality. Learn more at hennepin.us/greenpartners.

Setting zero-waste goals

Write down specific goals on what you want to change and how it will happen. You can create area goals (for example, by rooms of the house), goals for each member of the family, or just a progression of steps to take from easy to harder as you make your zero waste journey.

Write down what you're going to do to make a change, when, and how often it will happen.

Goal	Action	Time frame	Were you successful? Track each time this action occurred (or didn't)	Notes, troubleshooting
Reduce the number of bags we throw out	Bring (and use) my reusable bags	Every time I get groceries	1 yes 2 no 3 y/n 4 y/n 5 y/n	Problem: I forget my bags inside the house between shopping trips. Solution: When I unpack groceries, I put the bags next to my keys
Eliminate paper towel waste	Stop buying paper towels and use a cloth instead	When my paper towels run out, I won't buy any more		I had to buy a few wash cloths but now we are paper towel free!

Or you could write a statement that includes a goal, action, and time frame.

Examples:

- I will use reusable bags when I go to get groceries instead of taking plastic grocery bags.
- I will eliminate my paper towel waste by using a cloth and washing it.
- When the kids need new sports equipment, we will go to a secondhand store before buying new.
- When I go to the grocery store, I will bring a container to buy flour in bulk.
- I will use green cleaners to replace at least half of my household cleaners.
- Alejandra will go through her toys twice a year and donate the ones that are no longer her favorite.
- William will buy a reusable razor and only keep a few disposable razors for business trips.
- We will use washable Tupperware for Hassan's school lunch and snacks instead of zippered plastic bags.

Remember to check in on your goals. Keep yourself accountable by setting up calendar reminders, using a tracking app, or getting an accountability buddy (family member, friend, colleague, etc.).

Bathroom

Item	Category (trash, recycling, organics, other)	Can you replace or reduce?	Alternatives (item or action)

Laundry room

Item	Category (trash, recycling, organics, other)	Can you replace or reduce?	Alternatives (item or action)

Home office

Item	Category (trash, recycling, organics, other)	Can you replace or reduce?	Alternatives (item or action)

Other

Item	Category (trash, recycling, organics, other)	Can you replace or reduce?	Alternatives (item or action)

Waste sort guide

A waste sort is a process used to assess your household's waste. The sort is part of understanding how much and what kind of waste your family is generating. For the waste sort, you will collect and set aside waste for an entire week. At the end of the week, you will sort the waste to better understand what your household is generating and how well you are sorting your waste.

Pre-sort

- Prepare for sorting organics/compostable goods.
 - Make space in your refrigerator or freezer to store the organics you'll collect over the week
 - Go over organics collection with your household and make the collection point clear to all!
- Determine a spot to store the waste. Do not put waste in your cart; set it aside in your garage or basement to be sorted later.
- Identify and add bins for "gross factor" wastes like pet poop and other wastes. Your future self will thank you. It's only for a week, so use what you have, such as an old bucket or simply a plastic bag next to the trash.

Collect waste

- Collect for seven days – from trash day to trash day. **Try to follow your typical habits.**
- On the last day, go through the fridge to identify any food that's spoiled that you'll need to count in the sort.
- Set aside the waste from these seven days for the sort.

Complete the sort

1. Set up your sorting space.
 - a. Select hard surface such as a table, floor, or outside if weather permits.
 - b. Lay out plastic tarp to make cleanup easy.
2. Lay out the recycling
 - a. Re-sort the pile to pull out any trash, compostable items, household hazardous waste items, or reusable/repairable items.
 - b. Weigh each of the categories, and record them in the waste sort tracking sheet.
 - c. Take pictures of the groups of items.
3. Lay out all the trash
 - a. Re-sort the pile to pull out any recyclable items, compostable items, household hazardous waste items, or reusable/repairable items.
 - b. Weigh each of the categories, and record them in the waste sort tracking sheet.
 - c. Take pictures of the groups of items
4. Lay out the organics
 - a. Re-sort the pile to pull out any trash, recyclable items, household hazardous waste items, or reusable/repairable items.
 - b. Weigh each of the categories, and record them in the waste sort tracking sheet.
 - c. Take pictures of the groups of items

Waste Sort Data Tracking Sheet

RECYCLING			
Material	Weight (lbs)	Total Weight	Proportion (%)
Trash		T=	T/TOTAL=
Recycling (plastic, metal, glass, paper, cardboard, cartons)		R=	R/TOTAL=
Organics (food, paper towel and soiled paper waste)		O=	O/TOTAL=
Household hazardous waste (batteries, paint, aerosol cans, electronics, etc.)		HHW=	HHW/TOTAL=
Reuseable, donate, or repair items		Reuse=	Reuse/TOTAL=
Other (pre-sorted streams)		Alt=	Alt/TOTAL=
		TOTAL=	

TRASH			
Material	Weight (lbs)	Total Weight	Proportion (%)
Trash		T=	T/TOTAL=
Recycling (plastic, metal, glass, paper, cardboard, cartons)		R=	R/TOTAL=
Organics (food, paper towel and soiled paper waste)		O=	O/TOTAL=
Household hazardous waste (batteries, paint, aerosol cans, electronics, etc.)		HHW=	HHW/TOTAL=
Reuseable, donate, or repair items		Reuse=	Reuse/TOTAL=
Other (pre-sorted streams)		Alt=	Alt/TOTAL=
		TOTAL=	

ORGANICS/COMPOSTABLE ITEMS			
Material	Weight (lbs)	Total Weight	Proportion (%)
Trash		T=	T/TOTAL=
Recycling (plastic, metal, glass, paper, cardboard, cartons)		R=	R/TOTAL=
Organics (food, paper towel and soiled paper waste)		O=	O/TOTAL=
Household hazardous waste (batteries, paint, aerosol cans, electronics, etc.)		HHW=	HHW/TOTAL=
Reuseable, donate, or repair items		Reuse=	Reuse/TOTAL=
Other (pre-sorted streams)		Alt=	Alt/TOTAL=
		TOTAL=	

Diversion pre-sort	$(\text{Total Recycling} + \text{Total Organics/Compostable}) / (\text{Total Recycling} + \text{Total Organics/Compostable} + \text{Total Trash})$
Potential Diversion	$(R + R + R + O + O + O) / (\text{Total Recycling} + \text{Total Organics/Compostable} + \text{Total Trash})$

Recipes

Making things at home can cut down on packaging waste and save you money. The following recipes are included to help you get started.

Food

- Pizza dough
- Stovetop popcorn
- Yogurt
- Mustard
- Infused water and herbal teas

Personal care products

- Beeswax lotion
- Laundry detergent
- Shaving cream
- Hair care alternatives

Pizza dough



Turn pizza into more of a special occasion while eliminating plastic-coated frozen or cardboard pizza boxes. Making pizzas from scratch is also a fun way to get kids involved in the kitchen. They'll have fun squishing and kneading the soft dough, and they get to put on exactly the toppings that suit their tastes (potentially meaning less whining or wasted food!). You can even split the dough and let everyone in the family make their own personal pizza.

Ingredients

2 tsp dry yeast
1 c warm water
1 tsp honey or sugar
2 Tbsp olive or other oil
2 ½ c unbleached white flour (replace 1 cup of white with whole wheat flour for a heartier crust)
½ tsp garlic or onion powder
Optional: 1 tsp each or mixture of dried herbs such as basil, rosemary or oregano
Pizza toppings (sauce, cheese, etc.)

Supplies

Small bowl
Large bowl
Measuring cups and spoons
Cookie sheet or pizza pan

Directions

Activate yeast by stirring it with the warm water and honey in a small bowl. The water should be warmer than lukewarm but not too hot or you may kill the yeast. If you have a thermometer, aim for a temperature of 100-115 degrees Fahrenheit. Cover the bowl with a lid or towel and let it sit for 5-10 minutes. You should see it begin to froth or foam.

Meanwhile, mix flour with garlic or onion powder and any other spices in a large ceramic or glass bowl. Add oil and the yeast mixture, stirring until it begins to form a dough. Sprinkle some flour on the counter and put the dough down, kneading it until thoroughly mixed. If it is too sticky, keep sprinkling on more flour and knead until it doesn't stick to your hands. Oil the outside of the dough ball, place it back into the bowl, cover with a cloth and set it in a warm place for 15-30 minutes to rise. You can turn the oven to a low setting then turn it off and put the bowl inside or place the bowl near the oven vent on top of the range.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees and oil a cookie sheet or pizza pan. Take the dough ball from the bowl and flatten it

onto your pan, using the palm of your hand to spread it out from the middle. You can poke the surface of the dough to prevent bubbling. Once the oven has heated, pre-cook only the pizza dough for 8 minutes, then take out and assemble your toppings. Be careful, the pan and dough will be hot! Place the almost-finished pizza back into the oven and bake for an additional 10-15 minutes or until the cheese melts and the crust starts to turn golden brown.

Enjoy!

You can also make more dough than you will use and freeze the unused portion in a plastic zip bag. Just follow the directions up until you oil the ball and place back in the bowl- instead, oil and place it in a zippered bag, squeeze the air out, and freeze it. To use your frozen dough, remove from freezer and let it thaw in the fridge. Take it out, spread on a pan, and cook as normal.

Cooked pizza also saves well in the freezer. Reheat in a toaster oven for crispier results- microwaving will heat faster but leave the dough soft.

Stovetop popcorn



Adapted from [simplyrecipes.com/recipes/perfect_popcorn/](https://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/perfect_popcorn/)

Makes approximately 6 cups popped

Ingredients

3 Tbsp coconut, peanut, or canola oil (you need a high smoke point oil - don't use olive oil)

1/3 cup of high quality popcorn kernels (purchase from a bulk bin!)

Seasonings (butter, salt, pepper, herbs, to taste)

Directions

Heat the oil in your saucepan or pot on medium to medium-high heat. Put a few popcorn kernels into the oil and cover the pan. When the kernels pop, add the rest in an even layer. Remove from heat and wait 30 seconds, then place back on the burner. Put on the lid and gently shake the pan once you start to hear a lot of popping (this keeps things from burning). When there are several seconds between pops, remove the popcorn from the heat and place into a large bowl. Add melted butter, salt, and any other seasonings, and toss.

Here are some tasty combinations to spice up your popcorn life:

- Cinnamon and sugar
- Parmesan, rosemary and garlic salt
- Lime juice and salt
- Sriracha and honey
- Curry powder, taco seasoning, or other spice mixes

If you happen to have a Whirley Pop popcorn maker or find one at a garage sale, follow the official directions online! You can also use an air popper to avoid using oil.

wabashvalleyfarms.com/instructions.php?sel=whirleypop

Supplies

Large saucepan or pot with a lid



Yogurt



Ingredients

Half gallon of whole milk
¼ cup plain yogurt with live cultures

Supplies

Large saucepan or pot
Candy or food thermometer

Directions

Pour the milk into a large saucepan and slowly bring it up to 180 degrees. Be careful not to boil the milk. If you do not have a thermometer, heat the milk until it begins to steam and froth but not boil. Remove from heat and cool to 110-115 degrees, which still feels hot but not uncomfortable to the touch (be very careful if you test it this way). Add plain yogurt and mix together with a spoon, then let it sit in a warm place for 5-8 hours. To incubate the yogurt, you can use a thermos, place the pot inside your oven with the light on, place inside a cooler, or wrap it with a towel. You can also use a yogurt maker if you have one. When the yogurt has thickened, put it in an airtight container and refrigerate. If you notice the whey separating (a thin, yellowish liquid), just mix it back in. This is normal. Homemade yogurt can also be a bit runnier and tangier than the store-bought variety (store yogurt often has thickening agents and a lot of sweetener) - just add honey or maple syrup to taste, or mix in a bit of jam or fresh fruit.

Benefits of making yogurt at home

- You can recycle a milk jug with its cap instead of recycling multiple yogurt tubs and trashing the foil or plastic inner seal. This saves on some waste and is a preferred recyclable plastic
- It is cheaper than store-bought (compare the price of ½ gallon of milk to two quarts of yogurt)
- You can avoid additional colors and additives, plus control the amount of sugar in your yogurt

Mustard



Adapted from *The Homemade Pantry: 101 Foods You Can Stop Buying & Start Making* by Alana Chernila

Makes 1½ cups

Ingredients

½ c. brown or yellow mustard seeds, or both! (buy in bulk from your grocery store)

1/3 c red wine vinegar (other vinegars will do)

2 garlic cloves, minced (optional)

2 tsp salt (or to taste)

3 tablespoons honey (or to taste)

Directions

Put the mustard seeds in a bowl and add enough water to cover all of the seeds by several inches. Let it sit on the counter and soak for at least half a day. Drain water from the bowl, then combine all ingredients plus ¼ cup water and blend until smooth. You can reserve some of the soaked mustard seeds to add in after blending for a chunkier mixture. If it is too thick, add a dash more vinegar or water. Put the mustard into a sealed container and refrigerate for up to 2 months. Your mustard will be very strong for the first few days.

This recipe is highly customizable. Vary it by trying different kinds of vinegars and sweeteners, replacing the water with beer, wine or champagne (for adults), and/or adding a tablespoon or two of finely chopped fresh herbs like dill, thyme, oregano, basil or rosemary.

If you have a mortar and pestle or small food processor, you can easily cut the recipe down and make just a taste of different variations to find your favorite blend.

Supplies

Blender or food processor; a coffee grinder or mortar and pestle will also work

Infused water and herbal teas



Infused water

Adapted from dish.allrecipes.com/fresh-ideas-for-making-infused-water/

Flavor water to make it more interesting! If you do it yourself you can cut out bottled drinks like soda, bags and packaging for tea, and prepackaged drink packets. All it takes is water from your tap and fruits or leaves that you can compost when finished. Remember to wash your fruits, veggies and herbs and choose organic if possible. If you use items grown from your yard, make sure they haven't been sprayed with pesticides.

Mix an assortment of fruits, vegetables and herbs together. Add to cool or cold water and let sit for up to two hours at room temperature and then refrigerate.

Try a common combination:

- Mint leaves, sliced lime and strawberries
- Blueberries and sliced oranges
- Raspberries and sliced lemon
- Sliced cucumber and mint leaves

Other ingredients

Rosemary, grapefruit, pineapple, pears, lavender, ginger root

Herbal infusions or "teas"

Skip the tea bag or bottled teas and try making your own infusion of fresh edible leaves, flowers and spices in water! You can drink the tea hot or chill it and add a dash of sugar for a refreshing summer drink. Place a few leaves or pieces of the following ingredients loosely into a mug and fill with almost boiling water. You can also use an infuser, mesh ball, or reusable tea bag to contain it. Steep for five minutes or longer and drink. Remember to wash your fruits, veggies and herbs and choose organic if possible. If you use items grown from your yard, make sure they haven't been sprayed with pesticides or fertilizers.

Try these singly or in combination:

- Common herbs: peppermint, basil, sage, lemon verbena, lemongrass, rosemary, oregano
- Spices: ginger, cinnamon, cloves
- Flowers: Chamomile, rose petals and rose hips, lavender, calendula, bee balm, hibiscus
- Common backyard plants: Raspberry and blackberry leaves, pineapple weed, catnip, dandelion

Beeswax lotion



Adapted from A Sonoma Garden asonomagarden.com/2011/09/19/how-to-make-an-easy-beeswax-lotion/

Ingredients

- 1 c. olive oil
- ½ c. coconut oil
- ½ c. beeswax pellets
- ½ t. Vitamin E oil (approx. 5 capsules' worth)
(optional, preservative)
- 20 drops essential oil of your choice (optional, for
fragrance)

Supplies

- Pint-sized jar
- Small saucepan
- Measuring cups

Directions

Place olive oil, coconut oil and beeswax pellets in a pint sized mason jar. Create a double-boiler by placing the jar inside of a small saucepan and filling it up with water until it reaches an inch from the top of the jar. Make sure not to get any water into the jar. Heat over medium low and stir until melted. Remove from heat and let your mixture cool to room temperature, stirring every 15 minutes until it is cooled. Optional: stir in Vitamin E and essential oils at this point.

You can also check out another recipe for hand lotion and adapted from A Sonoma Garden at asonomagarden.com/2009/02/26/how-to-make-handmade-handlotion-w-label-download/

Laundry detergent



Ingredients

½ c washing soda (not the same as detergent or baking soda. Look for this in the laundry aisle)

½ c borax or baking soda (borax can also be found with laundry section)

1 c liquid castile soap

Water

Supplies

Gallon jug

Measuring cups

Directions

Put the washing soda and borax or baking soda in a gallon-sized jug and fill almost to the top with warm water. Then add the liquid soap, put on the cap and mix gently. Note: if you add the soap at the beginning you will get a sudsy mess!

Use approximately ¼ cup per load of laundry.

You can recycle the boxes for washing soap, borax and baking soda, and buy bulk castile soap at co-ops. Bottles of liquid castile soap such as Dr. Bronner's are also available at stores like Walmart and Target.

Shaving cream

Adapted from mommypotamus.com/natural-homemade-shaving-cream/

Ingredients

1/3 cup coconut oil
1/3 cup shea butter
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons liquid castile soap

Supplies

Small saucepan
Measuring cups and spoons
Medium bowl
Hand mixer or stand mixer

Directions

In a small saucepan, melt shea butter and coconut oil over low heat, stirring until fully melted. Add olive oil and mix, then remove from heat. Pour the mixture into a medium-sized bowl and refrigerate until it hardens. Take out of the fridge and whip with a hand mixer or stand mixer, using a rubber scraper to scrape down the sides. Whip until the mixture is fluffy, then add the castile soap in until blended. Transfer the shaving cream to an airtight container and store in a cool place.

Hair care alternatives



Shampoo

Take 2 tablespoons of baking soda and add water to make a loose paste (wetter than toothpaste but not liquid). Massage into scalp like you would use shampoo. Rinse. Note that the baking soda paste will not form suds like regular shampoo.

Conditioner

Fill a spray bottle with one part apple cider vinegar and three parts water. Shake each time before use. Spray over hair after shampooing and let sit for a bit, then rinse out.

Coconut oil or olive oil can be used in place of gels and conditioners as well to smooth hair, reduce frizz, and add shine. Place a couple of drops in the palm of your hand, rub your hands together, and run fingers through your hair. If you're using solid coconut oil, use your fingers to scoop up a tiny amount and rub between your hands to melt it. Experiment to find the right amount; you can easily overdo it.

Dry shampoo

Some people use "dry shampoo" to keep their hair looking fresh between washes. Try using cornstarch or arrowroot powder in place of dry shampoos, which often come in non-recyclable or aerosol containers. Dab some starch onto your fingertips and apply to your scalp to absorb excess oils. For dark hair, mix in a bit of cocoa powder or apply straight to your hair. If you use too much, brush your hair or rub it out with a towel. You can store your dry shampoo in a sealable container that you keep in the bathroom.

References and additional resources

Blogs

Personal accounts of zero waste journeys, including tips, products and recipes

- 100 Days of Real Food 100daysofrealfood.com
Healthy eating blog, focuses on kids' meals and frugal shopping
- Going Zero Waste goingzerowaste.com/blog
Written by a young woman in California, includes tips to get started and ongoing improvements.
- The Non-Consumer Advocate thenonconsumeradvocate.com
A mom who advocates for avoiding waste, living frugally and helping people live with less.
- My Plastic-Free Life myplasticfreelife.com
A California woman's commitment to avoiding the use of plastic.
- Trash is for Tossers trashisfortossers.com
Perspective of a young woman in NYC, includes many DIY recipes (including video tutorials).
- Zero Waste Chef zerowastechef.com
California mom devoted to cooking without plastic or processed foods.
- Zero Waste Home zerowastehome.com
Journey written by a family in California that has been living a low-waste lifestyle since 2008.

Other environmental websites:

- Buy Me Once
buymeonce.com/home-usa:
Website that highlights a wide variety of products with lifetime warranties.
- Environmental Working Group
ewg.org/guides/cleaners
Searchable toxicity database for different chemicals in household cleaners, beauty products, etc.
- Earth 911:
earth911.com/living-well-being/zero-waste-how-to-make-less-trash
Website offers tips on how to recycle, prevent pollution, and protect the environment. Has tutorials on DIY products, cleaners, and eco crafts.
- Tree Hugger
treehugger.com/green-home/zero-waste-backbone-needed.html
Sustainability lifestyle website and news source.
- One Can a Month Challenge – EnviroMom
enviromom.com/join-enviromoms-one-can-a.html
Website for a challenge to reduce waste to create one can of garbage per month.
- Mother Earth Living
motherearthliving.com/healthy-home/zero-waste-living-zmfz15jfhou.aspx
Magazine and online publication about living sustainably
- Minnesota Grown
minnesotagrown.com
An online directory listing farmers markets and local producers.
- Save the Food campaign
savethefood.com
Campaign developed by the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Ad Council to address food waste in America. The website contains tips and information about avoiding wasting food.
- Love Food Hate Waste
lovefoodhatewaste.com
A UK-based website with recipes, storage information and tips on reducing food waste at home.
- Hennepin County Green Disposal Guide
hennepin.us/greendisposalguide
Provides options for the best way to recycle, reuse or dispose of items from your home.
- The Freecycle Network
freecycle.org
Website to connect people and promote a sharing economy.
- Craigslist
craigslist.org/about/sites
Online classifieds website
- NextDoor:
nextdoor.com/
Neighborhood social/sharing group
- Twin Cities Free Market
twincitiesfreemarket.org
Reuse program created by Eureka Recycling.

Documentaries

- No Impact Man colinbeavan.com/movie/
A Manhattan family tries to make no waste for one year
- Expired? notreallyexpired.com/watch-the-film/
A short film about how confusing labels lead to food waste in America
- Just Eat It: A Food Waste Story foodwastemovie.com
75 minute documentary about food waste and food rescue
- The Story of Stuff: [youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM)
Short online movie about how we make, use and throw away products
- The True Cost: truecostmovie.com/
A story about the clothing industry and its impacts

Books

All of these are available through the Hennepin County Library system as hard copies. Some are accessible as e-books as well.

- All You Need Is Less: The Eco-friendly Guide to Guilt-free Green Living and Stress-free Simplicity by Somerville, Madeleine
- Craftcycle: 100+ Eco-friendly Projects and Ideas for Everyday Living by Heidi Boyd
- Eco Dog: Healthy Living for your Pet by Corbett Marshall
- The Eco-nomical Baby Guide: Down-to-earth Ways for Parents to Save Money and the Planet by Joy Hatch
- Eco Thrifty: Cheaper, Greener Choices for a Happier, Healthier Life by Deborah Niemann
- Green Guide Families: The Complete Reference for Eco-friendly Parents by Catherine Zandonella
- Green Tea Living: A Japan-inspired Guide to Eco-friendly Habits, Health and Happiness by Toshimi A. Kayaki
- The homemade pantry: 101 foods you can stop buying & start making by Alana Chernila
- Lemons and Lavender: The Eco Guide to Better Homekeeping by Billee Sharp
- The New Art of Living Green: How to Reduce your Carbon Footprint and Live a Happier More Eco-Friendly life by Erica Palmacrantz Aziz
- El pequeño libro verde del hogar: 250 trucos para un estilo de vida eco por Sarah Callard
- Ready, Set, Green: Eight Weeks to Modern Eco-living From the Experts at TreeHugger.com by Graham Hill
- Waste-free Kitchen Handbook: A Guide to Eating Well and Saving Money by Wasting Less Food by Dana Gunders
- Zero waste home: the ultimate guide to simplifying your life by reducing your waste by Bea Johnson
- The zero-waste lifestyle: live well by throwing away less by Amy Korst

Stores

- Tare Market, 2717 E 38th St, Minneapolis, MN 55406, thetaremarket.com
- Package Free Shop, online, packagefreeshop.com

Social media

The following accounts help you connect with a zero waste community both nationally and locally.

- @zerowastesaintpaul
- @zwmpls
- @trashtalk.mn: They also offer monthly meetups in the Twin Cities
- @zerowasteguy
- @zerowastechef
- @paredown
- @zerowasted.mn
- @_wastelandrebel_
- @bipocswho_zerowaste
- @going.zero.waste
- @trashisfortossers