

## Plastic & Alternatives

### Why do companies use plastic?

- It's very hard wearing
- It's designed to last for a very long time
- It helps keep certain items fresh
- It's quite cheap to produce

### Why is plastic / single plastic harmful to the environment and our health?

- It does not break down well at all!  
**DID YOU KNOW?!** it takes about 450 years for a plastic bottle to decompose and a plastic toothbrush takes even longer?  
So plenty of time for toxins to do some serious damage.
- 8 million metric tons of plastic end up in our oceans or a truckload every minute and it harms sea life and birds in the process!  
**DID YOU KNOW?!** Yearly plastic waste can circle the earth four times. There is more plastic in the ocean than sea life?  
In fact all sea turtle species have been found to have plastic in their system or around their bodies.
- Toxins in plastics can have an impact on our health and that of animals.
- Producing and burning plastic has serious effects on air quality and global warming.

### How does Plastic end up in our natural environment and in the ocean?

1. Littering (can blow into the ocean directly or in streams that run into the ocean)
2. Ends up in Landfill if not recycled (can blow into the ocean directly or in streams that run into the ocean)
3. Microplastics that enter our water streams (through e.g. toilet wipes or in our wash cycle - **DID YOU KNOW?!** Some clothes shed microplastics in the wash that are hard to filter)

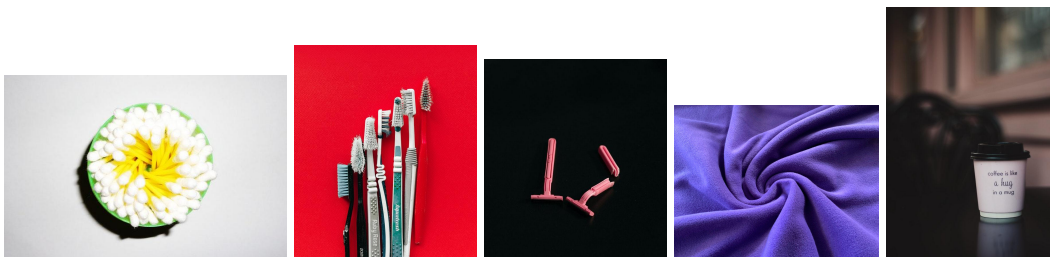
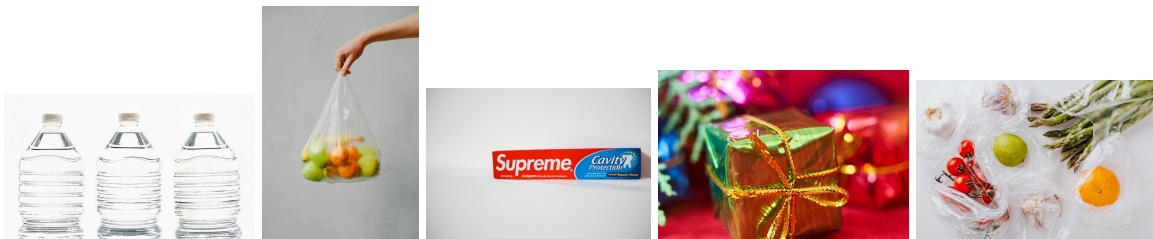
What can we have to do?

THE 3 R's

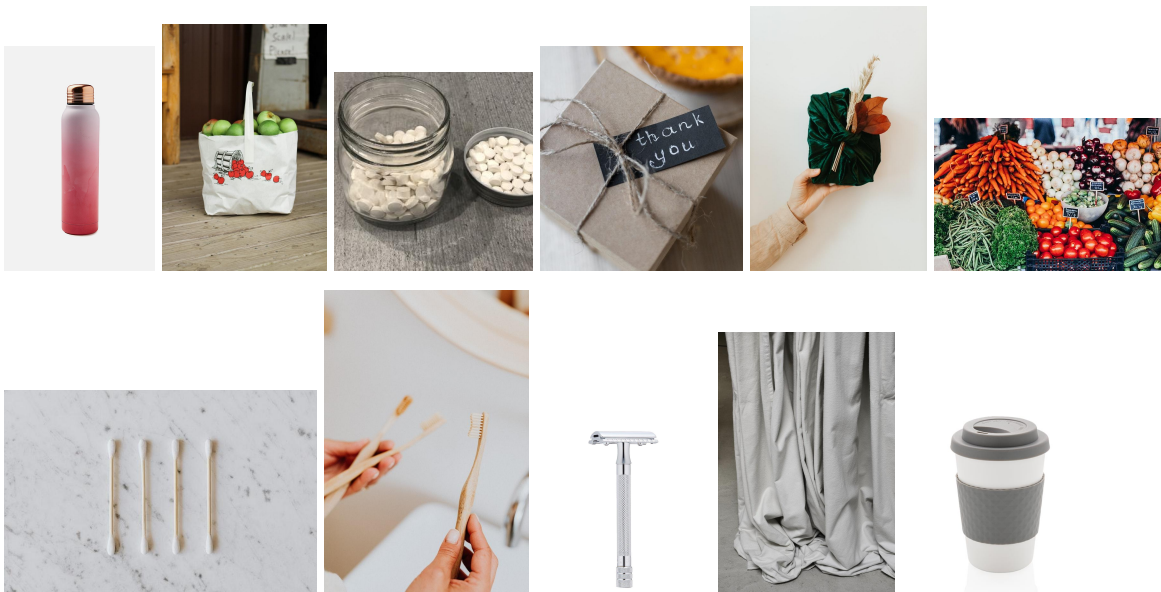
RE-DUCE  
RE-USE  
RE-CYCLE

Let's look at a few alternatives to plastics to REDUCE in our daily life:

Plastic



Alternatives



## REUSE

Think about reusing what you have as much as possible before you throw it away!  
Any ideas?

- Mend clothes or give them to someone who could use them.
- Save jars and use them to refill at your local refill shop, use them to store craft items e.g. pins etc. Have you tried painting them and using them as vases or candle holders?
- Plastic spray bottles can be repurposed too. Once cleaned you can either get refills or use them as a water spray for your plants.
- If you have plastic bags reuse them as much as you can before buying new bags.
- Use old rags and fabrics for cleaning or instead of kitchen roll.
- Try wrapping your gifts with string instead of sellotape so you can use it again and reuse gift bags.
- Use plastic bottles or containers for planting seeds.

## RECYCLE

There are many different materials that you can recycle or even better compost. In order for these not to end up in landfill you need to make sure you recycle these properly. Maybe you can set up some old boxes or containers to collect items for recycle:

- Compost - This is the best option of course as home compostable means you can put it on your compost heap and it will turn into nutritious soil after a while. Most unwaxed fruit and vegetables, as well as egg shells, coffee and unbleached coffee filters can be composted. There is also compostable packaging but look out for "Home Compostable"! Biodegradable & Compostable usually means that it can only be composted at a special recycling centre and unfortunately there is no local waste collection for these at the moment. These you can place in your normal bin. Do not place them in the recycling unless it says on the packaging that you can.

- *Glass & Plastic Containers* - before you place them in the blue bin you need to make sure to remove any sleeves as they are usually non recyclable (check packaging) and clean them out with some soapy water. If there is any food or drink bits still in there they might not get recycled.
- *Paper & Card* - check that your paper is not coated with plastic before placing in your green bin. Don't let it get wet as it might not get recycled if it is.
- *Batteries & Printer Cartridges* - there are collection bins in your local supermarkets!
- *Terracycle* - There are return stations for certain packaging e.g. crisp packets, empty beauty products etc. To find your closest drop off station search the Terracycle programmes and enter your postcode in the map search: <https://www.terracycle.com/en-GB/brigades>

**Become a ZERO HERO today by making good choices!**

**REDUCE -**

THINK! DO I REALLY NEED IT!

**REUSE -**

BE AS CREATIVE AS POSSIBLE!

**RECYCLE -**

TAKE THE TIME TO ORGANISE YOUR WASTE!

Session led by Nicole MCGlone (ECONsider)

Information sources: Greenpeace, WWF