



Ten Tips for Packing Waste-Free Lunches

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- 1 **Start with a reusable lunch box or bag.** Avoid single-use items like disposable plastic or paper bags. Personalize, monogram, or label your reusable lunch container and items so they do not get lost.
- 2 **Pack reusable utensils.** Avoid disposable plastic forks, spoons, and knives. Pack utensils made of durable plastic, bamboo, or stainless steel. Consider buying used utensils from a thrift store or using what you already may have at home.
- 3 **Scan your refrigerator and cupboards for appropriate lunch items** so you can stretch your food budget and reduce wasted food in your home.
- 4 **Use food storage containers made of cloth, durable plastic, glass, or stainless steel** that can be re-used. Avoid plastic baggies, plastic wrap, and aluminum foil. Use glass or ceramic containers to heat food items.*
- 5 **Drink from a re-fillable beverage container.** Avoid single-serving drink boxes, pouches, cans, and bottles. Filtered water in a reusable bottle is the healthiest and least expensive option. Skip the straw or purchase one that is reusable and can be cleaned after each use.
- 6 **Bring your own dips and condiments.** Single-use items are expensive and cost more money in the long run. Use small, reusable containers for salad dressings, ketchup, and other condiments and side dishes.
- 7 **Consider your napkin.** If you prefer paper napkins, purchase napkins that are made from 100% recycled paper. The most sustainable option is a cloth napkin. Remember to use environmentally safe detergent to wash them and line-dry to save energy.
- 8 **Compost fruit or vegetable scraps.** If composting is not currently offered, investigate what it would take to implement a composting program at home, school, or the office. Every item you compost makes a difference.
- 9 **Recycle what you can.** Check with your local waste hauler to understand what items are recyclable in your area.
- 10 **Host a waste-free challenge** at school, at your workplace, or in your home to see how small changes can lead to big reductions in waste.



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Making these small changes can make a big difference and help protect our environment. However, these changes can take time and money. If it seems too expensive, start small and recognize you will save money over time, especially if you ditch the more expensive, single-serve products and buy in larger quantities. For example, buying one large bag of pretzels and putting them in your own reusable containers is much cheaper than buying individual, single-serving bags of pretzels.

Remember you may have many of these reusable items or containers already so reuse what you have. If you need to purchase new items, consider buying from a local thrift store or zero waste store.

**Due to health concerns related to the chemicals used to make plastic, medical professionals and researchers suggest avoiding plastic to store, re-heat, or cook food.*