

# Simple SWAPS

Expert tips for integrating reusable items into your everyday routine.

BY SARAH PROTZMAN HOWLETT

There's no doubt about it: Recycling feels *great*. But as of late, hundreds of U.S. cities have either scaled back recycling or stopped altogether, reporting that the required energy and materials have become too expensive and increasingly complex.

Voices in the zero-waste movement would tell you we're looking in the wrong place for answers: The problem isn't that we're recycling all wrong—it's that we're creating too much trash in the first place.

Although it may seem daunting to change long-standing habits, we can all start somewhere, says Brown Cannon, founder of No2Plastic, based in Bend, Ore. "Pick one thing and be dedicated to whatever that is—be it no longer using plastic straws, water bottles or plastic cutlery," he says. "You might see it's not that difficult to inject that one change into your life." Check out [no2plastic.org](http://no2plastic.org) to join the movement. Here are some simple ways to get started:

## GROCERY BAG

Ever since some U.S. locales began charging for plastic shopping bags or banning them outright, taking reusable bags on a grocery run is increasingly common. Brittney LaGesse, owner of Refill Revolution in Boulder, Colo., loves the **Ecobags Classic String Bag** (\$13.99, [ecobags.com](http://ecobags.com)), which looks small but stretches a surprising amount and can safely haul everything from watermelon to wine. Don't forget about produce bags, too. Instead of plastic ones, try **Net Zero's 12-Pack Reusable Produce Bags** (\$39.99, [netzerocompany.com](http://netzerocompany.com)), made from eco-friendly, machine-washable mesh.



## WATER BOTTLE

In 2016, bottled water beat out soda to become the nation's most-consumed beverage. The downside: Each of those bottles sticks around for a long time—about 450 years, to be exact. With water-filling stations everywhere from gyms to airports these days, it's easy to go reusable. Cannon likes the lightweight and collapsible **Hydaway water bottle** (\$30 for a 25-ounce bottle, [shop.hydawaybottle.com](http://shop.hydawaybottle.com)).



## LUNCH CONTAINERS

No paper bags or plastic zipper bags necessary with **To-Go Ware's 3 Tier Stainless Steel Food Carrier** (\$27.99, [to-goware.com](http://to-goware.com)) or a **LunchBots Bento Box** (starting at \$24.99, [lunchbots.com](http://lunchbots.com)), both of which are good choices for a picnic or work lunch. "I like to tell people to look at what they already have at home [like mason jars], so they don't have to buy a bunch of new things," LaGesse says. Carry your lunch in a reusable, insulated **Out of the Woods Paper Sac** (\$12.99, [outofthewoods.com](http://outofthewoods.com)), made with a renewable, washable material derived from paper that looks and acts like leather, even though it's 100 percent animal-free.

## Shop Smart: Carbon Neutral Water ▶

Known for its thermal pools, waterfalls and striking terrain, Iceland is also host to many natural springs. The Ölfus Spring, which formed 5,000 years ago following a massive volcanic eruption, is where **Icelandic Glacial** sources its naturally alkaline water. And the company is proud that its bottled water is certified Carbon Neutral. How? It uses green energy sources to power its facility; invests in carbon offsets for renewable energy projects; and bottles its water—with a naturally occurring high pH level of 8.4—in BPA-free, rPET bottles, labels, caps and packaging that is all 100 percent recyclable. More at [icelandicglacial.com](http://icelandicglacial.com).

