

WHAT IS PLASTIC?

Plastic can be soft or hard, clear or coloured, recyclable or not. Have you ever noticed a number stamped on a plastic item? It tells you which kind of plastic it is. Some are better for the environment – and your body – than others.



FIZZY DRINK BOTTLE



Name: PET or PETE (Polyethylene Terephthalate)

Easy to Recycle? Yes.

Safe to Reuse? No. PET absorbs bacteria and flavours, so it is too hard to clean after it's been used. That means you shouldn't use a plastic water bottle more than once.



CONDIMENT BOTTLE



WATER BOTTLE



Name: HDPE or PE-HE (High-density Polyethylene)

Easy to Recycle? Yes.

Safe to Reuse? Yes.



LAUNDRY DETERGENT



SHAMPOO BOTTLE

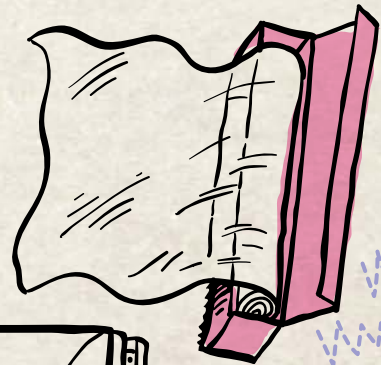


Name: PVC or V (Polyvinyl Chloride or Vinyl)

Easy to Recycle? No.

Safe to Reuse? No. Don't leave food wrapped in cling film for long because harmful chemicals can seep into your food.

CLING FILM



PVC WINDOWS

WHERE IS PLASTIC?

When you think about plastic, bottles and bags probably come to mind. But plastic is found in many places that you may not expect.

IN YOUR ELECTRONICS

Phones, keyboards, computers, games consoles – they're all made of plastic! So are TVs and their remotes.

IN YOUR CAR

Cars have a lot of plastic on their insides as well as a protective layer of plastic on the glass windshield. Plastic helps absorb the impact of a crash much more than metals does.

IN YOUR CLOTHES

The majority of clothing is made from synthetic fabrics, such as nylon or polyester, which are types of plastic. It may even be covering the sofa or chairs in your living room.

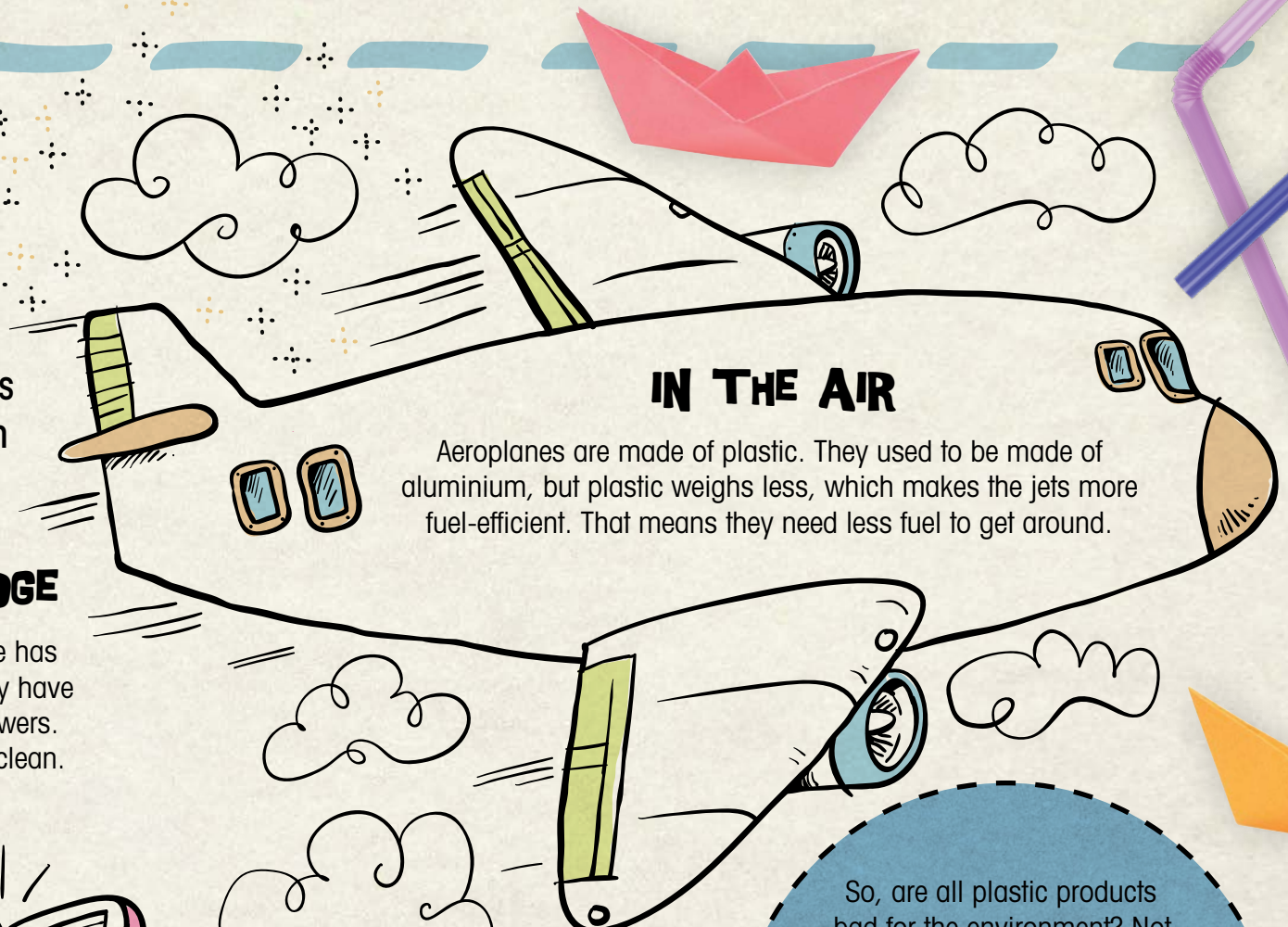
IN YOUR FRIDGE

The inside of your fridge has a plastic lining and may have plastic shelves and drawers. Plastic is easy to wipe clean.



IN THE AIR

Aeroplanes are made of plastic. They used to be made of aluminium, but plastic weighs less, which makes the jets more fuel-efficient. That means they need less fuel to get around.



ON YOUR HEAD

Your bike helmet is made from plastic. It's lightweight, strong and keeps your precious head protected in case of a fall.

So, are all plastic products bad for the environment? Not necessarily. The items on this page can be reused over and over. They are much better for the environment than single-use plastic, such as straws, plastic cutlery and takeaway containers. Turn to page 18 to learn more about single-use plastic.

PROBLEM #2 - PLASTIC

RECYCLING PLASTIC ISN'T EASY

"Reduce, reuse, recycle" is a common slogan used to encourage people to help the planet. But when it comes to plastic, "reduce, reuse and *refuse*" is a better mantra.

The majority of plastic ends up in the rubbish dump and the ocean. Only nine per cent of all the plastic in the world has been recycled! (By contrast, about 80 per cent of paper packaging is recycled in the UK.)

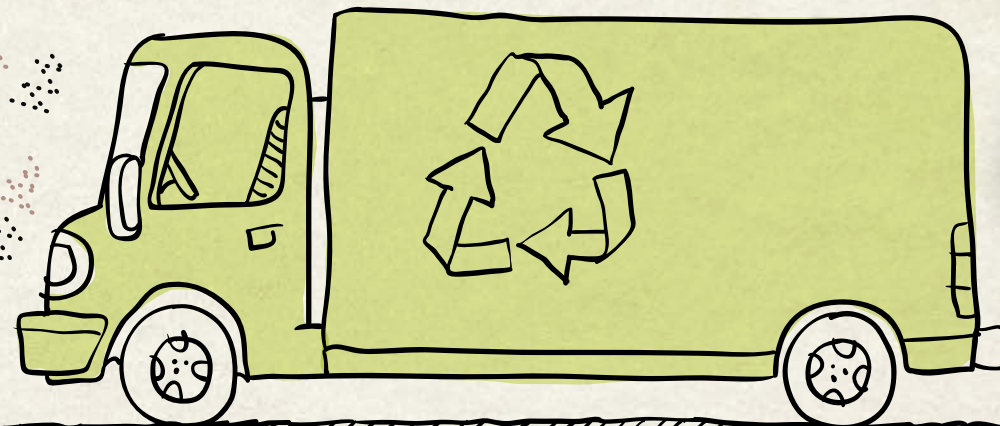
How did that happen? Well, recycling is confusing. Certain plastic can be recycled. Others can't. And even those plastics that can be recycled often end up in the bin.



Unfortunately, once plastic gets mixed with coloured dyes and other materials (like plastic toys often are) or tainted with food scraps (like food storage containers often are), it can't be recycled anymore. It's just too hard to separate the non-recyclable stuff from the recyclable stuff.

THE BIG PICTURE

Even if we put plastic in the recycling bin, we can't guarantee that it will end up at a recycling centre. Plastic bags easily blow out of bins before or during the collection process. It's better to avoid plastic in the first place!



RECYCLING IS A BUSINESS!

The reality is that recycling isn't free. It takes a lot of people, time, effort and money. Whatever you throw into your recycling bin gets picked up by a lorry, sorted, broken down and sold to another company that will turn it into a recycled product. That's how recycling centres make money.

TOP COUNTRIES FOR RECYCLING

1. Germany
2. Austria
3. South Korea

In order to keep their recycled materials pure and clean, recycling centres have to be very organised and focused. That means some items that are more difficult to recycle (such as plastic bags, which can easily get caught up in and break recycling machines), can't be put in recycling bins for collection. Instead, families have to bring them to a special centre. But, sadly, it's unlikely that people will go out of their way to recycle. Instead, those kinds of items often end up in the rubbish bin.



PLASTIC IS POLLUTING OUR OCEANS

If plastic doesn't end up at a recycling centre and it doesn't end up in a landfill, where does it go? Often, the answer is the ocean. Tragically, our oceans have become the world's biggest rubbish dump.

MILLIONS & MILLIONS OF TONNES

All kinds of rubbish end up in the ocean, including bottles, food containers, fishing nets, plastic bags, toothbrushes and more. 7.3 million tonnes of plastic go into our oceans each year, and scientists estimate that there will be more than 140 million tonnes of plastic floating around by 2025.

OCEAN DUMPING ACT

For decades, New York City and many other cities around the world used to purposely dump their rubbish directly in the ocean. A 1972 US law nicknamed the Ocean Dumping Act helped put an end to this. But rubbish from decades ago is probably still floating in the ocean today. And unfortunately, even more is joining it.

MOVING MARINE DEBRIS

It doesn't matter where marine debris is dumped. The Earth has just one big, connected ocean, and the waves are always moving. So, plastic from the other side of the world can float all the way around to your local beach.

Any kind of rubbish that ends up floating in the ocean is called 'marine debris'.

Rubbish has been found in the Mariana Trench, which is the deepest spot in the ocean, as well as on Henderson Island, an island in the Pacific Ocean that has no people living on it!



THE ZERO-WASTE MOVEMENT

Surely it's not possible to throw literally *nothing* away, is it?! Let's figure out what the zero-waste movement is all about.

Imagine you brought a lunch to school in a cotton bag with metal cutlery and a fabric napkin, a reusable water bottle and just the right amount of food kept in reusable containers. When you left the canteen, you'd have no rubbish to throw away. No recycling either. That's the zero-waste movement!

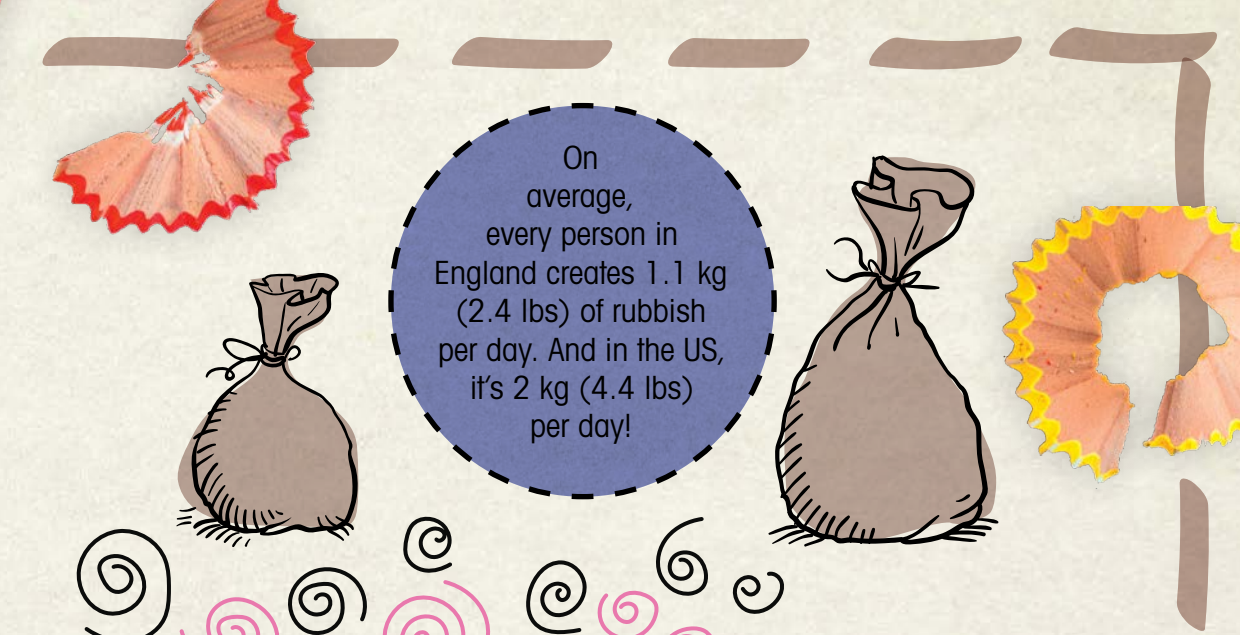
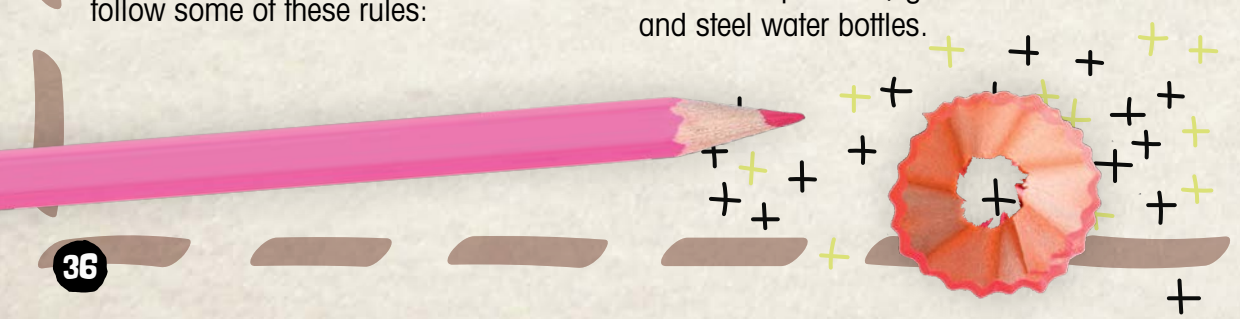
Zero-waste experts, including one woman named Kathryn Kellogg, can fit two years of rubbish into a single 480 ml (16 ounce) jar. How do they do it? They refuse, reduce, reuse, compost and recycle! Learn how your family can follow some of these rules:

Refuse to buy things that come wrapped in a lot of packaging. That means eating fresh fruits and vegetables instead of buying things such as crisps and crackers that come in plastic packets and boxes.

Do you really need that? That's one question you'll have to ask yourself if you're following the zero-waste lifestyle.

Reduce your environmental footprint by buying less stuff.

Reuse by taking care of your stuff, buying second-hand items when you can and investing in reusable products such as fabric food pouches, glass containers and steel water bottles.



On average, every person in England creates 1.1 kg (2.4 lbs) of rubbish per day. And in the US, it's 2 kg (4.4 lbs) per day!

Instead of throwing food in the bin, **compost** food scraps such as fruits, vegetables, coffee grounds and eggshells. (Paper, dryer lint and cotton can be composted, too!) These items can be added to a special composting container. This container will then be picked up by a composting service, which may be free in your city. Or, there may be a drop-off location. Check your city's website to learn about your options. The composted material then gets used as fertiliser – which is good for the soil and helps reduce the amount of items in landfills.

If you do need to buy something, make sure you can recycle it! But **recycling** isn't the best solution. It's better to avoid plastic in the first place!



DONATE YOUR TOYS

How many of your toys do you still play with? There may be more than a few that you've outgrown. Another kid could have a lot of fun with them! Instead of throwing them in the bin, pass them along to someone else. Here are some local places that may be looking for toys...

Childcare centre
Library
Homeless shelter for children
After-school programme
Charity shop

ORGANISE A TOY SWAP

Here is a fun way to get yourself some new toys without paying a penny or creating any waste. Just gather up some of your unwanted toys and invite over your friends. Don't forget to ask them to bring along some of their toys to swap, too. The best thing about this is everyone ends up with new toys and it's completely free. Everyone is a winner! You could also look for toy libraries in your area.

NOW THAT'S PROGRESS!

Some of the most popular toys in the world are made from plastic, including LEGO® bricks and Barbies. And that's a problem. But some companies are making changes for the better. By 2030, LEGO® hopes that all of their oil-based plastic bricks will be made from plant-based or recycled materials. They'll still look and work the same, but will be better for planet Earth. That's great news!

REFUSE FAST-FOOD TOYS

Fast-food chains often give away plastic toys as part of their kids' meals. Many people think these are wasteful and should be banned. How about saying no to your next free toy? If everyone did this, it would make a big statement and perhaps encourage companies to change. They could switch the material of their toys to something less environmentally harmful or give away something other than toys, such as small books!