

Planetary Wellbeing

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Reusable Grocery Bags Are Better for Your Soul

Reduce the amount of plastic waste that ends up in local landfills by choosing reusable grocery bags made from green materials for maximum planet benefits. Hearts guide to using eco-friendly grocery bags will help you save trees, reduce your consumption of fossil fuels, and protect oceans and wildlife, too!



Quick Facts: Plastic and Paper Grocery Bag Waste

- **1.5 million plastic and 1.1 million paper bags hourly:** That adds up to 14 billion plastic bags and 10 billion paper bags each year.^[i]
- **12 billion barrels of oil:** That's how much is consumed to make plastic bags.^[ii]
- **14 million trees:** That's how many are harvested to make paper bags.^[iii]
- **12% of landfill volume:** That's the space used by plastic bags.^[iv]
- **PCB bio toxins:** Plastic bags break down into particles in landfills, polluting soil and water with contaminants like PCB bio toxins.^[v]
- **15% paper bag recycling rate:** Paper bags also require four times more energy than plastic bags to produce.^[vi]

Take Action! Planet-friendly Grocery Bags

1. **When to use reusable grocery bags:** Don't just use reusable totes and handbags for packing everything at the till. Remember to use reusable bags for picking produce and getting items from bulk bins, too.
2. **Buy functional and reusable grocery bags:** If you're searching for a stylish bag that is a pleasure to carry, while also being very planet-friendly, look for bags that are extremely durable and that are made from green materials such as organic cotton, hemp, or recycled polyester. Hearts carries many ethical handbags from upcycled and eco-friendly materials, but [Reuseit.com](#) has dozens of produce and grocery bags made from green materials, too.
3. **Upcycle existing materials into eco-friendly grocery bags:** If you're not keen on spending money on new bags, why not get creative and make your own? Upcycling materials that are already in your home is inexpensive and very green. Try upcycling [old jeans](#), [secondhand T-shirts](#), [pillowcases](#), or even [crochet plastic bags into a new tote](#). Check out Tipnut for [50+ reusable grocery bags you can make](#), or search Pinterest and Etsy for more upcycled grocery bag ideas.
4. **Political actions to reduce grocery bag waste:** To advocate for more reusable grocery bags and less plastic waste in oceans and landfills, take the [Pledge to Stop Using Plastic Bags](#), and then have your friends take it, too.

Dig Deeper: the Negative Impact of Paper and Plastic Waste

- Learn how plastic harms people and our planet by checking out this informative article from the [Scientific American](#).
- Discover all of the reasons why paper bags just aren't as planet-friendly as you may imagine by reading this [Reason Foundation](#) think-piece.

Image via [glue&glitter](#)

[i] *Bags by the Numbers*. (n.d.). Retrieved from Waste Management: <http://www.wmnorthwest.com/guidelines/plasticvspaper.htm>

[ii] *Plastic Bag Facts*. (n.d.). Retrieved from Ecozel: http://www.ecozel.com/plastic_bags_facts.asp

[iii] *Checkout Choices: The Paper vs. Plastic Controversy*. (n.d.). Retrieved from National Cooperative Grocery's Association (NCGA): <https://www.ncga.coop/newsroom/paper-or-plastic>

[iv] *Checkout Choices: The Paper vs. Plastic Controversy*. (n.d.). Retrieved from National Cooperative Grocery's Association (NCGA): <https://www.ncga.coop/newsroom/paper-or-plastic>

[v] *Waste and Recycling Facts*. (n.d.). Retrieved from Clean Air Council: <http://www.cleanair.org/Waste/wasteFacts.html>

[vi] *Facts About Brown Paper Bags*. (n.d.). Retrieved from Earth911: <http://earth911.com/recycling/paper/brown-paper-bags/facts-about-brown-paper-bags/>

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