



TEN STEPS TOWARDS LOW-WASTE LIVING

1. Get Organized

Organized closets, cabinets, and refrigerators can help ensure your food, clothes and other goods are accessible for everyday use, and prevent overstocking or duplicating the purchase of something you already have.

2. Think Twice Before Buying New Stuff

Ask yourself — Do I need this item, or do I simply want this item? Do I have something that already fills this need? Can I fix an item I have, borrow from a friend, or buy surplus/resale?

3. Ditch Disposables

When shopping and dining out, bring your own bags, coffee cups, and to-go containers for leftovers, to reduce waste and save money. Carry sturdy utensils to avoid flimsy, landfill-destined disposables, and request NO single-use condiment packs, utensils and excess napkins packed in take-out orders.

4. Make Your Own

Getting crafty, creative and cooking can be rewarding and waste-reducing. Refill cleaning spray bottles with do-it-yourself, non-toxic formulas. Homemade, custom-seasoned popcorn, pickles, french fries, pancake batter, etc. can taste better than store-bought, preservative-laden, packaged versions.

5. Share the Love

The power of the purge is the joy it can bring to others! Unwanted, usable household goods, clothes, art/office supplies and more can easily be donated to churches or charities that support those in need. Other options include consignment/resale or giving away via Craigslist, Freecycle or NextDoor.

6. Raise a Green Baby

Chicago is lucky to have a cloth diaper service (greendiaperbabies.com) that washes and reuses healthy, organic cotton diapers, and adjusts sizes as your child grows. Family, friends, neighbors and mom's groups are often eager sources of lightly-used clothes, shoes, toys and gear (keep the best, donate the rest). Fresh, healthy, homemade baby food can be simple, easy, and better than anything you'll buy in disposable packaging.

7. If You Can't Reuse - RECYCLE RIGHT

Ask or look for ways to return items back to the source for reuse — think plastic film/shopping bags, clothes hangers from the dry cleaner, cell phones, ink cartridges, cardboard boxes and packing material — or check out Earth911 (<https://earth911.com>). Be sure your family knows what to trash, and what to put in the recycle bin (<https://www.recyclebycity.com/chicago/guide>).

8. Dive into COMPOSTING

Capturing the nutrient value of food scraps, wasted food and yard waste through composting reduces waste and harmful greenhouse gas emissions while strengthening soil health. Start small by using your leaves and grass clipping as mulch, and throwing your coffee grounds in the plants and garden once in a while. Seek DIY home options such as a backyard tumbler or vermicomposting (worm) bin, or hire a local service to pickup and process it, such as The Urban Canopy (<http://www.theurbancanopy.org>).

9. Set Yourself Up for Success

Make it easy to make the right decision at the point of disposal. Place recycle and trash bins next to each other. Consider an adjacent bin for “special handling” reusable or recyclable items you can sort weekly. A compost pail next to the sink makes capturing prep/table scraps a seamless step of your cooking and dishwashing process.

10. Make Conscious Choices

Recognize that your choices have an impact. When making a purchase, consider the source — where a product was grown or produced, the labor and resources involved in getting it from there to the store shelf or your front door, its operational efficiency (if an appliance like a refrigerator or washer/dryer), and how it + its packaging can be managed after consumption or at the end of its useful life. Becoming more aware in our decision-making is an important first step in reducing waste and conserving natural resources. Each small change can make a difference, inspire others, and... it just might feel good!

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