

Disposable Cups Plates and Utensils

Why we care

Each year, Americans throw away 108 billion disposable cups, 40 billion disposable eating utensils, and 30 billion disposable plates. The strain on landfills is obvious, but these products also consume more energy and materials than durable ones even when washing is considered. Most paper disposables have plastic liners that prevent them from being recycled. Plastic disposables do not biodegrade and may end up as part of the flotsam in the ocean that kills wildlife. Even bioplastic causes problems: It's a contaminant in plastic recycling streams, does not break down in home composting systems, and is not allowed in our local commercial composting facilities.

Simple, positive change

- Carry a reusable mug. If 50 customers a day in every U.S. Starbucks did this, the equivalent of more than 100,000 trees a year would be saved.
- If you forget your mug, ask for a ceramic mug for in-store orders and forgo the plastic lid for to-go use.
- Carry your own [containers](#) and [utensils](#) for take-out meals.
- If you are serving a large crowd:
 - Ask guests to bring their own tableware.
 - Borrow extras from a neighbor or guest.
 - Rent what you need from a rental shop.
- Have lightweight, washable tableware set aside for picnics and potlucks.
- Be proactive in your workplace, school, church, or other organization. Workplaces can buy washable tableware for lunches. If you have influence in a school, contact Jeanne Roy for free forks.
- Before August 31, take the City of Portland [survey](#) about reducing single-use plastics.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.