

Disposable Cups Plates and Utensils

Why we care

Each year, Americans throw away 120 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 “compostable” plastic plates and utensils are not allowed in our local composting facilities because they don’t break down into soil. And now we learn that microplastics are entering our own bodies.

Simple, positive change

- Carry a reusable mug. If Americans stopped using paper cups, 6.5 million trees would be saved.
- If you forget your mug, ask for a ceramic mug for in-store orders and forgo the plastic lid or paper sleeve 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.
 - Borrow a Mamas and Hapas [party kit](#) for 25 guests.
 - 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. Suggest that washable tableware be purchased.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne@ecoschoolnetwork.org