

# Essential Guide: Waste & Single Use Plastic

Being more eco-friendly and reducing both

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# Easy changes to reduce waste & single use plastic

Simple steps that cut carbon and save money

**Humans generate** a humungous amount of waste. A 2019 study found that the UK alone generated 43.9 million tonnes of commercial and industrial waste in the UK. Only 9% of it was recycled.

Failure to dispose of our waste properly results in greenhouse gas emissions and increasing your carbon footprint.

Single-use plastic, electrical and

food waste is among the worst of the contributors.

By recycling and making a conscious effort to dispose of your waste correctly, you could have a huge positive impact on the planet.

Recycling protects our ecosystems and wildlife, reduces demand for raw materials, saves energy, cuts carbon emissions and tackles unemployment. It's so easy.

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“The amount of waste the UK sends abroad is the equivalent of three and a half Olympic swimming pools every single day.”

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## Recycling symbols made easy

There are many different recycling symbols and they help us identify how different items should be disposed of.

As local councils all around the UK do not collect the same materials, the labels are based on what the majority collect.

If in doubt, you can use a postcode recycling locator to find out what you can put in your recycling bin.





**Recycle** - this label is applied to packaging that is collected by 75% or more of local authorities.

**Recycle | Rinse** - you should rinse the packaging before recycling to ensure that any food residue doesn't contaminate the other materials.



**Recycle | Rinse | Lid On** - replace the lid on plastic bottles to ensure that it is recycled as caps and lids under 40mm in diameter are too small to be recycled on their own.

**Don't recycle | Remove Sleeve / Film** - not all packaging can be recycled and it may mean that everything but the sleeve can be recycled so make sure you remove it before.



**Flatten | Cap On** - flattening packaging such as cartons or plastic bottles with the cap on makes handling and transport more efficient - less air, more recycling.

**Recycle with bags at large supermarkets | Don't recycle at home** - you can only recycle this packaging at plastic carrier bag recycling points in large supermarkets.



**Check Locally** - packaging is recycled by 20%-75% of UK regions so it is best to check with your local council.

**Green Dot** - it does not necessarily mean that the item can be recycled. It only shows that the company has made a financial contribution towards recycling efforts.



**Mobius Loop** - shows that a product can be recycled but does not mean that the item has been made from recycled materials. Sometimes there will be a percentage in the middle to show the percentage of recycled material.

**Plastic Resin Codes** - this identifies the type of plastic resin used to make the item. Plastics are classified from one to seven categories (widely recyclable to not recyclable).



## How can I easily know what I can or can't put in my recycling bin?

Recycling can be confusing, especially when each council has different rules.

In 2018, the BBC reported that there were 39 different sets of rules for what can be put in plastic recycling collections.

Although there may be a recycling symbol on a product, it

is always best to check your local guidelines too.

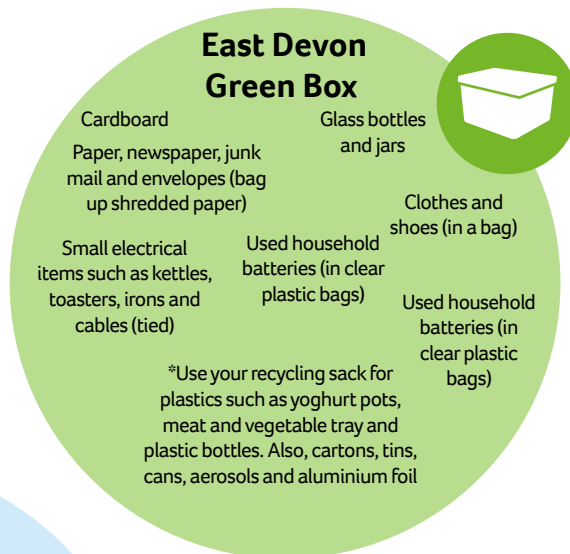
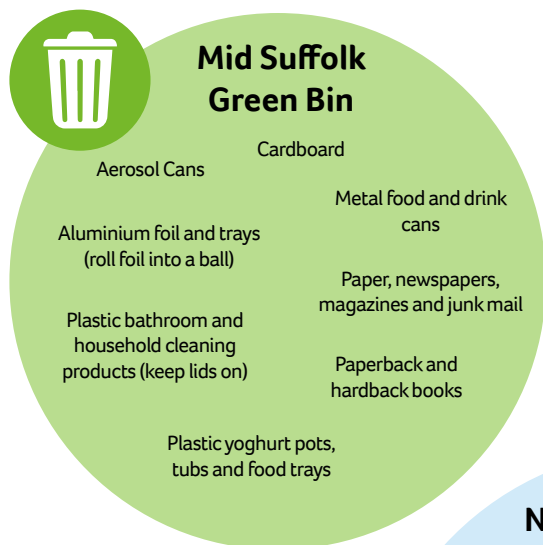
## There are a few key things you can do at home to improve your recycling rate:

- Get online and check your postcode to discover what is recyclable in your area.
- Rinse your food packaging to

reduce contamination from leftover food residue.

- Empty bottles and replace their lids to reduce contamination and ensure nothing gets lost in the process.

Have a look below to see a few examples of what different parts of the country recycle.





## Which councils recycle food waste?

Around 6.6 million tonnes of food is thrown away each year in the UK, most of which could have been eaten. This adds up to around £700 of waste on average per family. The uneaten food ends up in landfill

where it sits and rots, releasing harmful greenhouse gases.

Not to mention, it's a waste of energy that was used in production, transportation and storage.

If your council allows, putting your food waste in with your garden waste or using a separate food waste bin helps reduce your carbon footprint and bills. Many councils now collect food waste which can be disposed of using in-vessel composting or anaerobic digestion.

In-vessel composting involves shredding and composting food waste and garden waste in an enclosed heated system, eventually to be used as soil conditioner.

Anaerobic digestion uses microorganisms to break down food waste.

It releases methane during this process which is collected and converted into biogas and used to generate electricity, heat, or transport fuels.

The nutrient-rich product can also be used as fertiliser.



“Change one habit at a time.  
Change one person at a time.  
Change the world.”

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**2 million** metric tons of plastic is wasted every year in the UK!

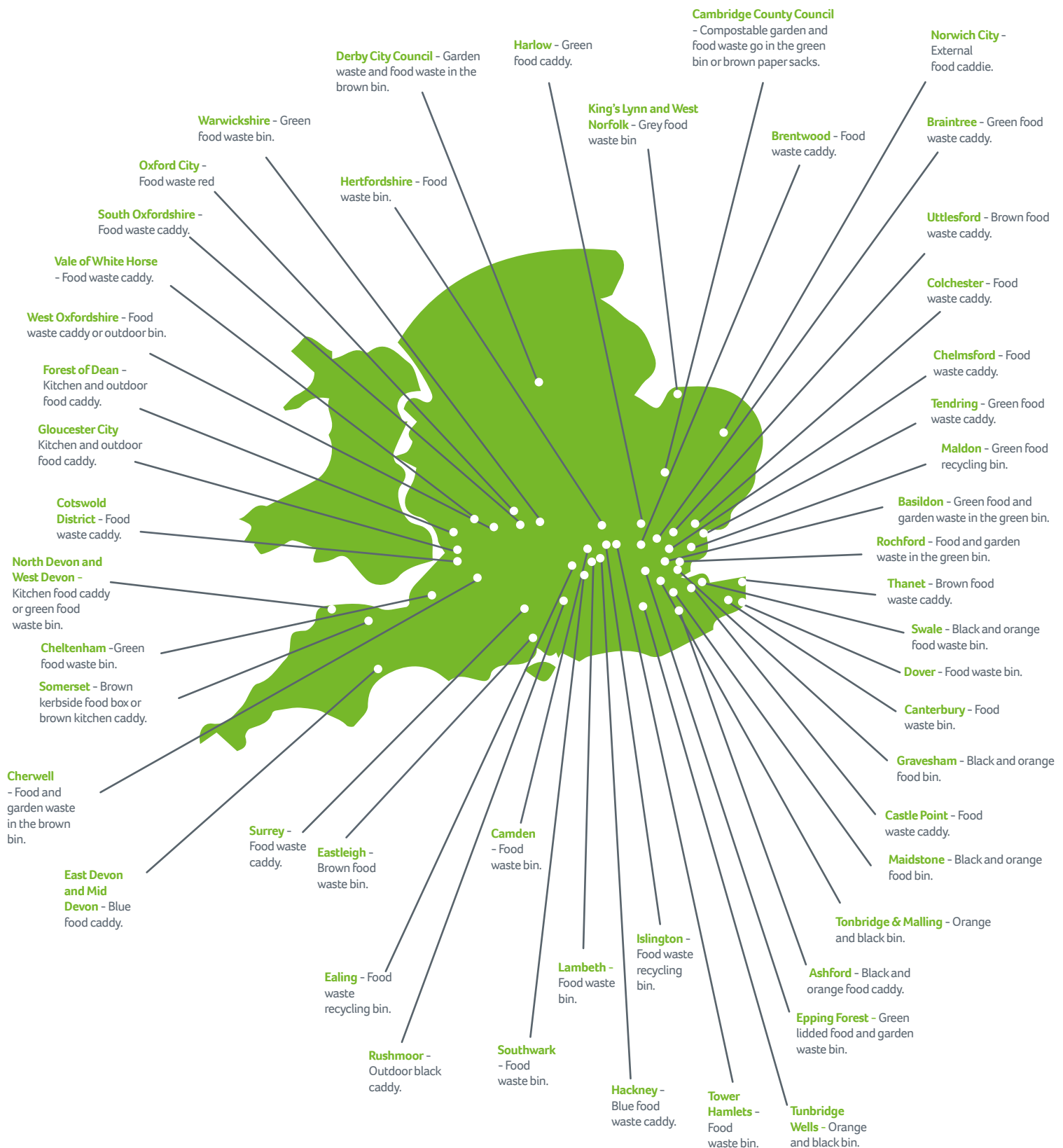
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**As well as** 9.5 million tonnes of food.

3

**And...1.45** million tonnes of e-waste!

# Discover if your council recycles your food waste sustainably below:



\*London flats differ.

If your council is not on this list, that is not to say that it does not accept food waste. We suggest checking your local guidelines. If not, home composting is an inexpensive, natural process that can reduce your carbon footprint and create nutrient-rich food for your garden.

## What waste causes the highest greenhouse gas emissions?

More than 4% of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2019 came from the waste sector, which produced 22 megatons of CO<sub>2</sub>. The main culprits were food and single-use plastic waste.

### Plastic

Each year, roughly 380 million tonnes of plastic is produced (the equivalent of 2,700,000 blue whales).

Only 16% of it is recycled, 40% is sent to landfill, 25% is incinerated and 19% is dumped.

The UK sends much of our waste abroad, releasing more CO<sub>2</sub> through transport.

Much of the 84% of plastic could be recycled but many factors contribute to its lack thereof such as label confusion, insufficient resources and contamination with other waste.

Some products also use a combination of plastics which cannot be easily split apart, resulting in the whole lot being wasted.

Lots of plastic is littered which finds its way into the ocean by the wind and rain.

According to a report by Bennington College and Beyond Plastics, the plastics industry accounts for roughly 232 million tons of greenhouse gases each year.

From drilling to oil to waste, it is the equivalent of 116 coal-fired power plants.

### Food waste

In their latest review, the Office of National Statistics found that

9.5 million tonnes of food (a third of the world's food) is wasted in the UK. This releases 36 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, totaling 8% of the UK's total emissions. Bread, poultry, and potatoes are the highest offenders.

Food waste also takes into consideration the resources that are used to produce food.

Deforestation results in reduced biodiversity and soil degradation.

Not to mention, transportation has a huge carbon footprint, especially if it travels by plane.

Transporting food within, to and around the UK produces 19 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year.

Plus, we use a lot of water to produce food, especially meat. Agriculture accounts for 70% of the water use in the world. If we throw away just 1kg of beef, we throw away 50,000 litres of water.

When food waste eventually ends up in landfill, it decomposes without access to oxygen which releases methane, a gas even deadlier than CO<sub>2</sub>.

### E-waste

However, in their most recent report, Global E-waste Monitor warned that e-waste is the world's fastest-growing waste stream.

It refers to any discarded electronic with a battery or a plug.

The UK is producing 1.45 million tonnes of e-waste every year and the incorrect disposal of valuable metals like gold, copper and steel are costing the economy over £370 million.

Not to mention the CO<sub>2</sub> - if we recycled our small electrics, we could save 2.8 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> which is the equivalent of taking 1.3 million cars off the road.

1

**27% of people** think their council's communication on recycling is poor.

2

**A family of four** could save £60 a month by reducing food waste!

3

**Home composting** can save the equivalent of all the CO<sub>2</sub> your washing machine produces in three months.



# Tips for reducing food waste

Saving food means saving money and saving the planet. Better yet, it's totally easy! Follow our top tips to reduce your home's carbon footprint.



## Make a shopping list and stick to it

It's easy to stock up on things you don't need just because they're on offer. Instead, only buy what you need by planning ahead and shopping with weekly meals in mind.



## Repeat kitchen audits

Get into the habit of going through your fridge and cupboards to ensure you're eating everything up. Remember the 'first in, first out' mantra and arrange your cupboards in date order



## Store food correctly

Don't forget your reusable alternatives like Stasher and beeswax wraps to store leftovers and extend their life.



## Freeze your leftovers

From vegetable scraps to leftover lasagne, it can all go in the freezer to be used at a later date. Write down the date so you remember what needs eating first and regularly go through its contents.



## Enjoy a leftover day

Try eating up your leftovers one day a week to give yourself a break from cooking and ensure nothing gets forgotten about.





## Keep your vegetable stems in water

You can extend the life of some of your vegetables such as broccoli, celery, and asparagus in water to keep them crisp and fresh for longer.



## Swap fresh fruit for frozen

If you find yourself throwing away your fruit before you have a chance to eat it all, swap to frozen. The ready-made mix is great for a smoothie.



## Spruce up stale bread

Either pop it in the microwave for a 10-second refresh or rehydrate with a drop of water and pop in the oven.

# Tips for reducing plastic waste

Using the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle mantra can reduce the plastic that ends up polluting our oceans and environment. Choosing reusable plastic alternatives can also help you get your money's worth. Use our top tips to reduce your carbon footprint and bills.



## Reuse your caffeine fix

Plastic on the go is one of the worst culprits. Remember your reusable coffee cup on your way to work. Most places also give you a discount for using your own cup.



## Pack your lunch in a bamboo lunchbox

Rather than purchasing a meal deal in your lunch break, use up your leftovers in a reusable lunchbox, a double win for the planet.



## Buy loose products

Opt for loose fruit and vegetables rather than the packs that often come packaged in multiple materials. They're exactly the same, just better for the planet.



## Swap to bars of soap

No more empty bottles hanging around your bathroom, bars of soap and shampoo are just as effective at cleaning. Bars use plant-based ingredients that are gentler on your scalp and don't damage your hair with chemicals.



## Remember your reusable bag

We're all guilty of forgetting but make it impossible for yourself. Always keep shopping bags in your handbag, car and by the front door.



## Visit your local refill shop

Stock up on your household favourites such as pasta, lentils, beans, and oats by bringing your own container, saving single-use plastic packaging. Myth buster: it's not more expensive!



## Ditch the clingfilm

It sticks to everything, including the planet. Choosing sustainable food storage saves millions of tonnes of plastic reaching landfill or worse, a sea mammals throat.



## Use natural cleaning solutions

Choosing products such as ecoegg, Oceansaver and Ecozone not only stop toxins entering your home but reduce the number of plastic bottles that add up under your kitchen sink.

# What to do with my old electronics

E-waste which isn't recycled correctly can leach toxins into landfill, the planet's soil, air and water. On average, the UK throws away between 20 and 25kg of electronics a year.

Being mindful of how you dispose of your electrics can reduce your carbon footprint and reduce the negative



## Pass it on

Just because it is not of value to you anymore doesn't mean that it isn't valuable. 700,000 homes lack access to adequate digital devices or the internet in the UK.

If your electronic is still in good working condition, sell it, pass it on to someone you know or donate it to charity. Most charities accept old mobile phones even if they aren't working because they can earn money by sending them to recycling companies.



## Recycle it

Mobile phones contain up to 80% of recyclable material such as silver and plastic. The key parts can be extracted and reused, reducing stress on finite resources.

It's easy to check if an electrical product can be recycled at the end of its life. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does it have a plug?
- Does it use batteries?
- Does it need charging?
- Does it have this icon on it?

If the answer is yes to any of them, it is recyclable!

**We hope this has been wheelie helpful!**

But if you've anymore questions drop your Carbon Mentor a message!

