

Waste Less, save more

a GUIDE FOR NORTH LONDON HOUSEHOLDS



Wise UP

To Waste

nlwa
north london waste authority



WHY WASTE LESS AND save MORE AT HOME?

Welcome to our Waste Less, Save More household guide. This booklet has been developed by North London Waste Authority to provide north London residents with tips and advice on how to waste less and save money when shopping and at the same time be kinder to the environment.

We all take a range of factors into account when we shop, such as the cost of what we are buying, quality, or even ethics. Many of the products we buy generate waste and cost your council, or sometimes cost individuals directly, to dispose of them when no longer wanted.

If we make small changes at home, adjusting purchasing habits, reusing, recycling and composting instead of throwing away, the results can be significant over a longer period of time. In particular, this booklet discusses how to reduce food waste; making decisions about packaging; reusing bags; buying products as refills or concentrates or buying items that will last or reusable products.



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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

It costs you money to dispose of products when they become waste...

In the UK we produce 177 million tonnes of waste every year. A significant proportion of the waste generated from households is food and drink, although other material such as plastics and packaging waste are also produced and cost money too. It is estimated that the disposal of food and drink waste from UK households costs £12.5 billion each year. In London alone, we produce 890,000 tonnes of food waste per year and 61% of this is avoidable.



It's bad for the planet...

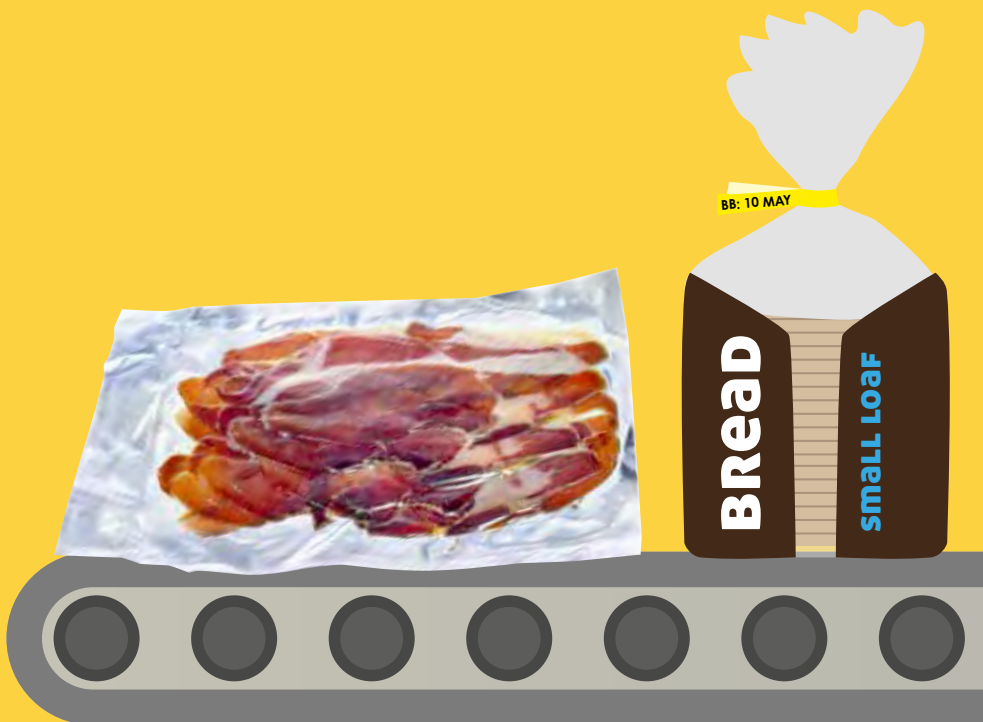
We cannot keep producing waste at the same rate because it is a wasteful practice which means that valuable materials may end up being buried in landfill sites from which they cannot be used again. Production as well as disposal of waste can have a harmful environmental impact; biodegradable waste, such as food waste is particularly harmful. If food is thrown away, the resources used to produce it in the first place, packaging, transportation, as well as disposal – are all for nothing. Furthermore, food waste in landfill contributes to climate change, producing the potent greenhouse 'landfill gas' – a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide and a liquid called 'leachate' which if uncontrolled can lead to groundwater contamination.

IN FACT, IF WE ALL REDUCED OUR FOOD WASTE AND THEREFORE REDUCED EMISSIONS, IT WOULD BE LIKE TAKING ONE OUT OF FOUR CARS OFF THE ROAD.



What manufacturers and retailers do?

Although there is a lot that consumers can do to reduce their waste, manufacturers and retailers also play their part. In 2005 the government-funded Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP), launched the Courtauld Commitment, a voluntary scheme to encourage waste reduction in the UK grocery sector. Food manufacturers, brand owners, suppliers and retailers were approached to sign up to the commitment, thereby pledging to make their practices more resource efficient as well as reducing food and packaging waste.



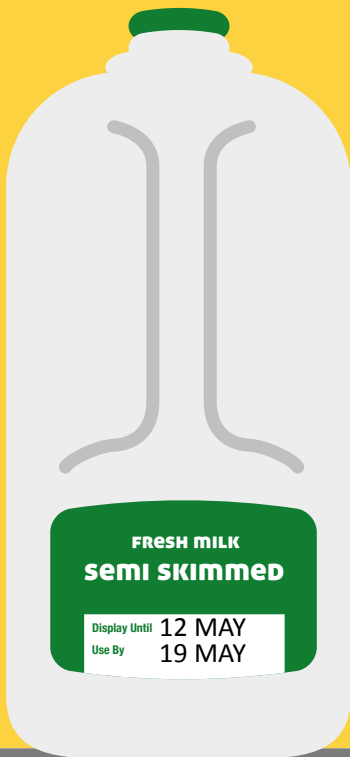
There are lots of ways big companies have helped to reduce waste:

■ Packaging has been 'optimised', or improved, so that it is either reduced overall; helps protect food better (reducing food wastage) or helps food stay fresher for longer.

■ On-packaging guidance to consumers on food products in particular has been made clearer so that when we buy something we more easily understand how to store food or when it is safe to eat.

■ Many of the big retailers have begun promoting a food waste reduction message to their customers too. Supermarkets offer information and tips, such as recipe ideas for leftovers via online tools or leaflets.

■ By ensuring they recycle more or by improving the recyclability of their packaging, for example by making the packaging out of a single recyclable material, rather than two that are difficult to separate, companies have also reduced the environmental impact of packaging waste.



CLOSE THE LOOP

Our modern consumer lifestyle requires a constant supply of energy and resources which simply cannot be sustained. There is a tendency for us to make use of something and then simply discard it. 'Closed loop' is a term used to describe a more efficient and sustainable way of living. Lots of items or materials that we ordinarily throw away still have potential to be reused or recycled. Do your bit to support a closed loop economy:

- Choose products made from recycled material, such as toilet rolls, kitchen towels, tissues, writing paper, bin liners, pens, and rulers.
- Try to buy items with reduced packaging. If there is packaging, make sure it's recyclable or made from recycled material.
- Consider repairing broken items.
- Items that are no longer needed or wanted can be listed on community giveaway websites such as Freecycle and Freecycle.
- Share items and services with your neighbours by joining Streetbank. Sign up at www.streetbank.com.



If we cannot reduce or reuse waste, recycling it still ensures a 'closed loop' because we utilise the full potential of a material. Recycling is also cheaper. It costs less to local authorities and uses a lot less energy to manufacture with recycled materials, instead of raw materials. Contact your local council to find out what recycling services are available to you.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE WASTE AT HOME

In this section we discuss some of the ways you can waste less and save more at home. Trying to avoid unnecessary food waste is a really good starting point. Reducing other types of waste such as plastic are also important, even though it is important to remember that packaging serves an important purpose by protecting products and helping them to last longer.

Food waste

In the UK we throw away the equivalent of one out of five shopping bags worth of food that we buy and most of this food could have been eaten. Food waste also costs us money. Work by WRAP has shown that the average family in the UK could save up to £700 per year by reducing the amount of food they waste, that's equivalent to £60 a month. Not only is throwing away this amount of food a waste of money for individual households, it is also a waste of the resources that have been used to prepare and transport this food and, as mentioned above, it is bad for the environment, too.



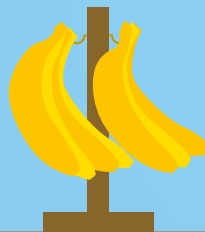
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Although it can be difficult to know where to start, reducing food waste is simpler than you would think. Follow these five simple steps to see how much you could save:

1. Planning meals in advance can be a great way to ensure you buy only what you need. Regularly check what food you have in your cupboards, fridge and freezer and make a shopping list before going shopping.

2. Getting portion sizes right can reduce the amount of cooked food that you throw away. Work out your perfect portion and use weighing scales or a mug to help you measure.

3. If you do have leftover food, turn it into another meal. Soups, stews, omelettes and salads are all great dishes for using up leftover ingredients. To see recipes and tips from the north London community that can transform leftovers to something new visit www.wiseuptowaste.org.uk/wise-up-to-waste/waste-less/food-waste/recipes.



ready meal

ready meal

4. It is important to eat foods by the end of the **'use by'** date, which is found on perishable foods that could make you ill if you eat them after this date. The **'best before'** date refers to quality rather than food safety.

5. By **storing** food correctly and according to the guidance on the packaging, you can help it last longer. Lots of foods can be frozen, such as bread and milk or most fruit will last longer in the fridge, especially if kept in original packaging. To learn more about food waste reduction and start saving money, try signing up to North London Waste Authority's Food Waste Challenge at www.wiseuptowaste.org.uk/challenge.

It is, of course, virtually impossible to reduce all food waste. Some foods like banana skin, fruit peel or meat or fish bones are considered unavoidable food waste. These can be recycled by using your local food waste collection service or by using a composting unit or wormery. Home composting not only reduces your environmental impact but also transforms your biodegradable waste into valuable nutrient-rich food for your garden.

If you do not have much space, a wormery can be a great alternative; worms eat the food waste, leaving a liquid fertilizer and a small amount of compost. Many local authorities sell composting units and wormeries at a subsidised price.

Contact your local council or visit

www.wiseuptowaste.org.uk/composting
for more information.



Packaging

Unnecessary or excessive packaging can be frustrating. Packaging can be avoided altogether by choosing to buy products loose or using items, such as reusable drinks bottles or coffee cups, rather than disposable ones. Similarly, some packaging can be useful to us, glass jars can be reused as pencil holders or cardboard can be used for home composting.

However, not all packaging is bad and it can play an important role in reducing food waste because it protects products from damage or contamination. Some foods will keep fresher for longer when left in their packaging - a cucumber will last three days more if sealed

in shrink-wrap plastic and the air in salad bags is modified to keep salad fresher for longer too. In addition, food sold with re-sealable openings, or in more convenient portion sizes - such as half loaves of bread - can help consumers to better manage the food they buy.

Carrier bags

In the UK at least 6.5 billion plastic bags are given out each year; that's over 100 for every person in the UK. Producing these bags requires energy and a great deal of (mainly) plastic. In order to reduce single use carrier bags, from September 2015, large retailers will be charging consumers **5p per carrier bag**.

A similar charge has been in operation in the Republic of Ireland since 2002 where a 90% decrease of single-use plastic bags was observed.



By reusing carrier bags, we can use them to their full potential, as well as stop accumulating new ones unnecessarily. There is also a range of purpose-made reusable bags available that can be used over and over again.

Refills

The principle of refills is that containers for products are refilled and returned home instead of buying new ones, such as glass bottles for doorstep milk deliveries. Though refill services used to be commonplace, changes in the market and availability of raw material saw their decline. However, there remain many benefits to the system; for example the cost-savings of **bulk-buying** the products to go inside the refillable

containers can be passed on to consumers. Refill systems also produce much less waste overall.

Lots of products are available as refills, including cleaning products, washing powder, cosmetic products like shampoo and dry foods such as breakfast cereals, flour, nuts and dried fruit. Some larger companies have begun to offer refills in their stores. Local shops often have more opportunities for less packaging and you can sometimes take your own containers along as well.



Concentrates

Many products can be purchased in concentrated form and are simply diluted by the consumer, once home. Concentrates usually represent better value for money as well as requiring less packaging and comparatively less vehicles to transport them. The only thing to bear in mind about these products is that they must be diluted properly or used in smaller quantities, following instructions provided.



Economy size products

If you have the space, buying long life products in bulk can help save money and packaging, as well as reducing visits to the shop. Almost anything can be bought in bulk. For instance, oil, breakfast cereal, rice, washing powder, toilet rolls, or even hardware items such as nails can be bought in bulk. If you need to keep the product fresh use food clips or elastic bands.



Avoid disposable products

Disposable products are often seen as more convenient, but they are not necessarily any more effective than reusable equivalents. Buying quality goods that last might cost more as a one-off payment but can ultimately help consumers to save money. A good old-fashioned dishcloth can be used instead of kitchen roll; a flannel instead of facial wipes or non-disposable razors instead of disposable ones.

Many personal hygiene products are marketed as being more convenient but the waste they generate poses a significant environmental problem. For

instance, disposable nappies take a long time to break down. If in landfill, their global warming impact per child is 550kg of carbon dioxide equivalents whereas reusable cloth nappies, in comparison, generate 64% less. In north London a **subsidy system** is offered to parents to purchase 'real'/ re-usable nappies. Parents either receive a voucher or cash back to the value of £54.15. To find out more visit www.wiseuptowaste.org.uk.

The same applies to feminine hygiene products, such as tampons without applicators, or menstrual cups. Both options can save you money and reduce waste.



Furniture and electrical items

If something breaks, simply replacing it with a new version can sometimes appear the most convenient solution. Yet by extending the lifespan of the item through repair we can save ourselves money. This course of action also avoids unnecessary wastage of materials and resources; both for the production and retailing of a replacement item, and also the energy required to sort and process/recycle the unwanted object.

If you have the time and motivation, you may find that you can repair something by yourself. There is a lot of information available online, including tuition videos which talk you through

the repair of anything from fixing a washing machine door to reupholstering an armchair. Parts for items can be requested from the manufacturer and most companies have troubleshooting information or direct contact for customer services.

There are many repair services and schemes available in London. Charities such as the **Repair Cafe**, or **Restart** offer free advice and hands-on repair assistance. There are also many local businesses specialising in repair. What's more, if you need to repair a large household item, many manufacturers provide repair services as part of their legal obligation to minimise the number of their products thrown away.



Presents

Over the two weeks between Christmas and New Year, we create an extra 29,000 tonnes of waste in the UK. All the gifts, decorations and packaging we buy require energy and resources both for manufacturing and disposal. Yet there are still ways to limit the damage:

■ Choose gifts with **less, or recyclable, packaging** and don't forget that when we buy a product, we also pay for its packaging.

If care is taken, wrapping paper can be reused before it is discarded. Place the paper underneath a tea towel and then iron the two together. This will iron out any creases in the paper while minimising the risk of the paper browning in the heat. Better still, try the **Japanese Furoshiki** technique where gifts are wrapped in (reusable) fabric.



■ Consider **homemade gifts** such as chutney, biscuits or a cushion cover or bag made from material scraps.

■ **Experience gifts** or donations to charities on a person's behalf can make special and memorable presents. Tickets to a show, a day out or beauty treatment are just a few suggestions which avoid any waste packaging.

■ As an alternative to paper cards, **ecards** are waste-free and can include a charity donation.





Textiles

It is estimated that £140 million worth of used clothing goes to landfill each year in the UK. Yet many of these clothes could probably have been worn again, or if not, recycled. Perhaps some of these clothes were simply in need of repair or adjustment but the owners did not know how. If you do have unwanted textiles, there are lots of easy ways to ensure that they are reused:

■ Try clothes swapping, or '**swishing**': Either host your own swishing party with friends or take some unwanted items to an organised event where you can swap them for something else. We produced a **Swishing Party Pack** to help you hold your own swishing party.

■ Upcycle your clothes or make more use of them through alteration and repair and save the cost of buying new ones. Visit www.loveyourclothes.org.uk for useful tips and ideas about ways to maintain, repair or even enhance your clothes.

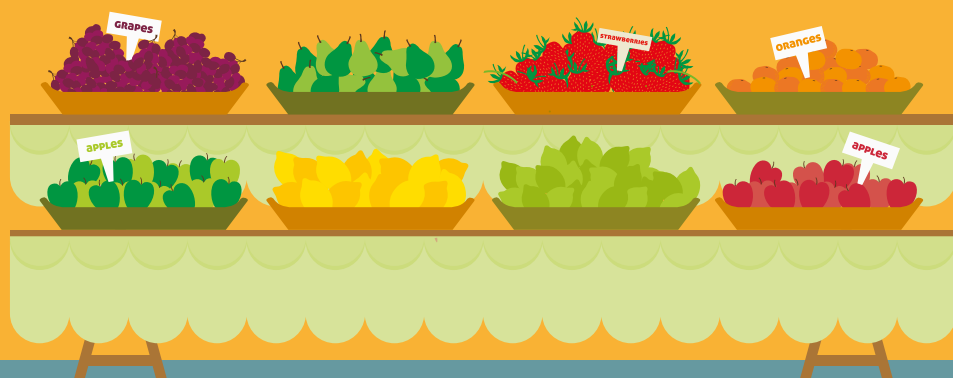
■ **Donate to charity** or make use of an **on-street textiles bank**. Use the charity shop locator to find charity shops near you at www.charityretail.org.uk/locator.php. When textiles are beyond repair, you can still put them to good use by recycling them. To find your nearest textiles bank visit www.recycleforlondon.com.




WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

There are many other ethical considerations when we shop. You could consider some of the following:

- Buy food produced in season, avoiding food that has had to be transported by air.
- Where possible, support your local economy and buy fruit, vegetables and meat from local grocers, butchers, box schemes or farmers' markets, where all items are locally-produced.
- Overfishing is putting many species of fish in danger, as well as upsetting the ecosystem; opt for less endangered varieties and buying 'line caught' fish.
- Fair-trade products, such as cotton, have been grown in a sustainable way, both in terms of farming methods but also from an ethical perspective, supporting development in communities across the globe.



We hope that you found this guide useful. Finding ways to waste less at home can be satisfying; not only do we save money, we can also feel more self-sufficient as we don't always need to get to the shops to buy more. For more information about us and our waste prevention programme, visit www.wiseuptowaste.org.uk or follow us on Twitter  [@wiseuptowaste](https://twitter.com/wiseuptowaste).



TOP TIPS FOR WASTING LESS and saving more at home

- ✓ Reduce the amount of food waste you produce by planning meals, perfecting portion sizes and making use of leftovers.
- ✓ Avoid unnecessary or excessive packaging, although be aware that not all packaging is bad – it can keep many foods fresher for longer.
- ✓ Reuse carrier bags or use 'long life' cotton or jute bags.
- ✓ Reuse your own containers and buy products as refills.
- ✓ Buy products as concentrates which you dilute yourself at home.
- ✓ Try to buy reusable or good quality products that will last longer, for instance, non-disposable razors or reusable nappies.
- ✓ Try swishing to get a new wardrobe for free.
- ✓ Consider waste-free gifts such as homemade biscuits or an 'experience' gift, such as tickets to a show.
- ✓ Reduce your paper waste by opting out of junk mail or signing up to 'paper-free' billing.
- ✓ Repair broken items or donate them to charity or via community giveaway websites.

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