

A CRASH  
COURSE IN

GOING  
ZERO  
WASTE

KATHRYN KELLOGG

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**01** **INTRO:**  
What is Zero Waste?

---

**02** **INDIVIDUAL ACTION:**  
Ideas for Taking Action

---

**03** **COMMUNITY ACTIVISM:**  
Growing Your Influence

---

**04** **POLITICAL ACTION:**  
Making Changes in Your  
Community

---

**05** **GROUPS &  
ORGANIZATIONS:**  
Amplifying Your Voice



# FOLLOW THE 5 R's

## REDUCE

Do you **really** need it? Reduce what you consume, and get in the habit of asking yourself questions to reduce your purchases



## REPAIR

With proper care and maintenance, your things will last a lot longer. Repair things when they're broken to keep all of those resources in play for as long as possible before going to waste.



## ROT

Organic matter can't breakdown in landfills so compost baby! It's one of the best things you can do for the environment.

STEP  
01



## REUSE

Get out of the disposable mindset and look for timeless, well made things you can reuse over and over again like glassware, garden hoses, or even a little black dress you can wear for years to come.

STEP  
02

STEP  
03

## RECYCLE

Recycling should be an absolute last resort. Instead of focusing energy on recycling, instead try and find ways to avoid packaging in the first place like through a refill model i.e. bringing your own cup to a coffee shop.

STEP  
04

STEP  
05



# I N T R O

what is zero waste?

The simple definition: to send nothing to the landfill.

The definition I like: to completely write waste out of existence.

Natural historian David Attenborough has said the "one thing" everyone can do to help save the planet is "don't waste anything, don't waste electricity, don't waste food, don't waste power".

I think waste gets to the core of a lot of our problems, and there's so much that we can waste beyond just what we put into our trash can.

Everything is connected, and wanting to live a zero waste lifestyle is an easy way to start recognizing many of the issues our planet is facing.

And, before we go any further, I want to address the 'zero' part of zero waste living. Zero waste is a GOAL, it's impossible to actually achieve zero waste.

So, don't worry about it. It's not about being absolutely PERFECT it's about using your lifestyle choices to signal a change in consumer habits for manufacturers and policy which we'll get into a little bit later.

The term 'zero waste' was first used in the 1970s by Paul Palmer as an industrial term for his company Zero Waste Solutions. But zero waste was happening long before that, we just didn't have a fancy term for it.

In fact, zero waste is super unsexy. At its core, it's depression era living. Waste nothing, use everything, repair what you have.

We can go back even further, and look to many indigenous cultures who wasted absolutely nothing and lived in harmony with nature for centuries.

Waste didn't become a massive problem until manufacturing and production took off post WWII. Today, the U.S. produces more than 30 percent of the planet's total waste even though it's home to only 4 percent of the world's population.

I think Earth Overshoot Day explains our waste problem best. It's a day, on the calendar, to mark when we've used all the resources the earth can sustainably produce for the year, and in 2019, we hit it at the end of July.

We're using MORE resources than the Earth can produce - essentially 'borrowing' resources from the future, and we're running out! While this might not be a problem for one or two years, we've been doing it for 50 years!

I'm not going to get super deep into all of our problems in this little booklet because I really want to talk about solutions and actions you can take to make a difference. Individual action is where it all begins so let's get to it.

***Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.***

***- Margaret Mead***

# INDIVIDUAL ACTION

Once you've learned more about the ecological crisis we're facing it's time to start aligning your values with your actions.

Here's a list of tips to help get you started living a more eco-friendly life.

1. Ask for no straw in your drink order when out.
2. Don't leave your house without a full reusable water bottle.
3. Ditch tissues for handkerchiefs.
4. Always say no thank you to free promotional items. They tend to be cheap and break easily.
6. Donate unused items in good condition to support the second-hand market.
7. Think second-hand first when purchasing something.
8. Swap your plastic toothbrush for a bamboo toothbrush.
9. Wash clothes when they are actually dirty, instead of after only one wear.
10. Open a window to cool down your home or air it out.
11. Try to avoid palm oil.
12. Eat more plants and less animal products
13. Buy food without packaging or minimal packaging.
14. Instead of buying something when you're having a bad day, do something. I.e. go on a walk, take a yoga class, meet up with a friend.

15. Commit to bringing your reusable bags to the store, and don't forget to bring reusable produce bags for fruits and veggies too.
16. Carpool more
17. Use bar soap instead of liquid soap, it tends to come with less packaging.
18. Swap disposable pads and tampons for cloth pads, period panties or a menstrual cup.
19. Change light bulbs to LEDs.
20. Put on a sweater and socks before turning up the heat.
21. Turn the water off while brushing your teeth.
22. Buy less. Don't buy anything impulsively wait 30 days before making a purchase.
23. Check out your farmers market to support your local farmers.
24. Eat more local food.
25. Meal plan to avoid food waste.
26. Unplug electronics when not in use.
27. Repair something when it breaks instead of buying new like finding a cobbler to repair tired shoes or a tailor to mend a rip or a tinkerer to fix the blender
28. Try your hand at an easy all-purpose cleaning spray.
29. Store your food properly to make it last longer.
30. Know where everything you buy comes from whether it be food, clothing, or other household goods
31. Shop online less, and ask for no plastic and reused packaging materials for online orders.
32. Pack your lunch in a reusable lunch box instead of eating out every day.
33. Line dry a load instead of using the dryer.
34. Ditch plastic shower loofahs for a real loofah or a bamboo bath brush.
35. Ask for a real mug at the coffee shop when staying in or bring a reusable thermos when you're getting to go.
36. Always run a full dishwasher or load of clothes.
37. Most sunscreen causes coral bleaching, go coral friendly!

38. Bring your own container for to-go food and leftovers.
39. Ditch paper towels and use tea towels and rags.
40. If it's a 30 minute or less walk, get outside instead of driving.
41. Vote with your dollars by supporting companies that have environmental initiatives.
42. Look into tree-free TP or get a bidet attachment!
43. Opt for rechargeable batteries instead of disposables.
44. Use cloth napkins.
45. Eat more vegetables and legumes.
46. Keep a bucket in the shower to catch water for plants or flush the toilet. Make sure your soap is biodegradable.
47. Wrap presents in newsprint or not at all!
48. Swap cotton rounds for reusable rounds.
49. Focus on experiences rather than things.
50. Switch from a plastic disposable razor to a metal safety razor.
51. Wash your clothes in cold water when you can.
56. Try Wheatless Wednesdays to cut back on intensive grain farming.
57. Go paperless for all your bills!
58. Swap don't shop! Host a clothing swap with friends.
59. Pick up litter when you're out and dispose of it properly.
60. Make your morning cup of coffee with a french press or pour over with a reusable filter to avoid extra waste.
61. Ditch sponges in lieu of compostable scrubs or brushes.
62. Try to shrink the amount you recycle by avoiding all packaging!
63. Use both sides of the paper.
64. Take public transit more often.
65. Join a community garden.
66. Compost!!!!!!!
67. Swap tea bags for loose leaf tea in a reusable strainer.
68. Don't use any single-use plastic.
69. Avoid polyester, fleece, and other plastic clothes as they release micro-plastic particles into the wash which can't be filtered out.
70. Swap plastic wrap for reusable beeswax wrap or silicone bags.



# COMMUNITY

Once you've got a good handle on that list, it's time to take those skills outside of yourself, and show your community. The first step is finding your local community.

Having a local community is amazing because together you can create a true grassroots movement. You can talk about the environmental and social issues affecting your town which allows you to help your community live a greener and healthier life.

How do you actually find the people who are interested in the environment? My first recommendation is always Facebook. Look for zero waste groups. There are larger groups like Journey to Zero Waste or Zero Waste Heroes, but there might also be a zero waste group for your country, city, or state.

Another great place to look is on [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com). There seem to be meet-ups for everything! Just with a quick glance I see a whole bunch of groups that have a lot of potential.

Groups like litter busters, foragers, zero net energy, climate election action, climate solutions, ecology leadership group, gardening, community building, and many more that can help you find a crew interested in eco-friendly living.

Once you've found a community through Facebook or Meetup.com, try to find new members through a neighborhood app.

Next Door is a really popular app in my neighborhood, and it's a great tool used to organize community cleanups and tell neighbors about ongoing events.

With this group there are so many events you can put on like:

1. Screen a documentary at the local community center.
2. Host a talk at the library.
3. Create a workshop teaching others how to DIY their products, teach them to grocery shop without any packaging.
4. Show them how to cook delicious in season produce from the farmers market without creating food waste.
5. Teach others how to compost.
6. Show others how a zero waste home operates.
7. Email, write, and talk to local businesses about their packaging.
8. Petition city council

Once the group is in the full swing of things, make sure you're publicizing your group. You want people to be able to find you and join your cause.

Ask members to share the Facebook group with their friends. Ask them to post on Next Door or to bring friends to the meetings.

If you're hosting a clean up or another public event like a talk, make sure to send a press release to the local paper so they can include it. You'll find the more active you become in the community, the more people will want to join your cause.

# P O L I T I C A L

With this community you've built it's time to go to your city council, petition, and even craft legislation. Sounds pretty scary right?

But, it's honestly pretty easy once you understand how local government works. The first step is to check out your local .gov.

I'm willing to guess your city has a website, and you'll be able to find out A LOT of information from what boards and commissions operate, who serves on them, and the times and dates of their next meeting.

You should also be able to find city council members information and the city clerk. All of these people are here to serve you the citizen. If you would like to get involved, you can always send them a nice email and they'd be more than happy to point you in the right direction.

I recommend finding a board or commission to start with. I serve on the beautification commission and from first-hand experience, we would love for you to email us or come visit us in a meeting.

Google "boards and commissions in (your cities name, and state)" There will be a handful of boards and commissions. Find which one you feel identifies most closely with the types of changes you'd like to see in town.

Let's start with a really common idea like a neighborhood clean up. Let's say you'd like to host a neighborhood clean up, and you want the city's help.

First figure out how would you need the city's help? Like helping with awareness, supplying the tools like dumpsters and pickers, and maybe you'd like to have them help with organization.

How could the city help with these things? Could the city add it to their newsletter? Share it on the cities social media page? What type of tools do you need? Do you need a large dumpster to put all of the litter in? Do you need trash bags and gloves? How many people do you need to help run it? Could you do with one volunteer? Really think about what this event looks like, and what you need help with.

Write everything down. You don't have to have a perfect solution. But, it helps to come to the table with some ideas to show you've thought about it and are willing to help!

After you've pitched to the board or commission, they will take your request under consideration. Depending on how they work within your local government will depend on the next steps.

Most likely they will be able to help you through public works/ another branch or they will go through their assigned city council member to bring it to the city council to vote on.

Remember government moves slowly! It can feel like this process is distant, but make a friend with a member on the board and follow up with them. They can keep you in the loop.

Then hopefully your project is approved! Go you! You got involved and made your city a better place!

There are all sorts of things you can bring to your local government. Another popular bill would be a straw ban, bag ban, or any other types of plastic. Look to cities who have passed legislation in these areas to draw inspiration.

Here's some other ideas for getting involved in government:

1. VOTE! Make sure you and your friends are registered to vote, and volunteer to drive friends to the polls.
2. Canvass or phone bank for politicians or laws you believe in.
3. Join the Citizen Climate lobby which will plug you into a local community, organize meetings with your local representatives, and help you advocate for a carbon tax.
4. Set up monthly reminders to email, fax, call, or arrange face to face visits with your representatives.
5. Attend city council meetings.
6. Run for office!!

# G R O U P S

Then make sure that you're supporting groups and organizations. There are so many organizations doing amazing work which also help to influence policy.

If you can, set up recurring monthly donations. If you're not able to donate at the moment, be sure to send them an email. Ask if there's a way you can support their cause beyond monetary.

Often, there's a lot of stuff you can help out with, even simple stuff like sharing their photos, liking, commenting, and engaging with them on social media.

Here are several of the organizations I support, that you might want to consider supporting and donating to as well. Drawdown, Earth Justice, Rainforest Alliance, Sierra Club, World Wildlife Fund, Oceana, and Environmental Defense Fund.

My hope is that after reading this booklet, you feel incredibly empowered. I hope you realize how much change you can create as an individual!