

# Reducing waste



After properly disposing of all the waste you currently create, you can begin to look at where you can prevent waste in the first place. Remember that zero waste is not just about getting items out of the trash but reducing what goes into your recycling and organics recycling as well. Not creating waste in the first place is always better than recycling it!

If you haven't done so already, note which materials you still have in abundance. This could be a good time to conduct another informal waste audit by going through your waste streams again. Use the worksheets at the end of this guide to help lay out your goals and monitor your progress.

## Setting waste-reduction goals

Once you've evaluated your waste, ask yourself the following questions to choose your waste-reduction goals:

- What is left in my trash? What do I have the most of in my recycling and organics?
- What can I change about my waste?
- Are there certain areas of the house that will be easier than others to tackle first?
- What are my reasons for trying to reduce waste? Thinking about what matters the most to you – health, cost, environment, decluttering, etc. – can help with prioritizing your actions.

# Rethinking what you bring into your home

Transitioning to a lower waste lifestyle involves being more intentional about what you buy or otherwise accumulate. It can be useful to think about materials before they become waste. In other words, think about what you are bringing into your home rather than what is going out.

Consider the following frameworks when you are considering getting new things:

## Want versus need

Ask yourself:

- Do I need to buy this?
- Can something else be used for the same purpose?
- Does it add value to my life?
- Am I going to still want it one month from now?

## Source

Consider:

- Can I rent or borrow this item?
- Can I buy it secondhand?
- Can I purchase it locally or find it package-free?

## Material

Think about:

- What is this item made of?
- Can I fix it if it breaks? Are replacement parts available?
- Does it have resale value if I no longer want it?
- Where does it go when it is broken or used up? Can I recycle or compost it?

Asking yourself these questions before you acquire a new thing helps you slow down to consider your impact and ensures you are being thoughtful about the resources you consume.

The rest of the guide includes a breakdown of how to reduce waste from different categories of your life, including with food, packaging, and plastics, your wardrobe and personal care routines, as well as when it comes to kids, pets, traveling, home management, cleaning, remodeling, and hosting gatherings.

