

Are You Part of Plastic Pollution or The Plastic Solution?  
By Zach Taschler

Walking along the beach on Long Island my view of nature was interrupted by plastic litter all over the beach. Worse, I could see seagulls picking it up and mistaking it for food. I wondered why no one was cleaning the beach. Then I wondered, why am I waiting for someone else to do it? Instead of going for a swim that day, I sat down to plan how I could help eliminate or reduce plastic use in my own home.

According to ENM News, “Plastic is practically an invasive species. It’s clogging the oceans, littering cities and tainting wilderness areas that are supposed to be pristine.” Plastic is quite literally everywhere. One main victim of this “invasive species” is the ocean. Have you ever heard of the report that states, “There will be more plastic in the ocean than fish in 2050”? This mind-boggling fact was introduced by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and has become widely known. This robust statement alerts people that plastic has invaded the ocean and continues to proliferate.

Single-use plastics are a huge part of the problem. These are plastics that are only used once and then are thrown away or recycled. Fifty percent of the plastic that’s in the ocean is single-use: think of the Starbucks drink you got after school. When you were done, you tossed the cup, top and straw. Multiply that by the 3 friends with you and their cups, and then all the kids all around the country using cups for 15 minutes and then throwing them out after school. While plastic might be a necessity for some things, there is no reason to use it for *everything*. Is the alternative-glass- just is too heavy? Too bad! After all, Earth’s our only home and the ocean’s critical to all life.

I live in NYC and plastic’s overflowing our trash cans and ending up on the streets and going into our drainage system. My generation and I are disappointed with past generations who couldn’t think ahead to see that plastic would be a problem. But it’s not too late. We can help to eliminate plastic. The easiest way to do that is to stop buying single-use plastics. They make up 50% of the plastic that’s made per year, so if we can eliminate using 50% of all plastic, we’re halfway there! Bring your own reusable cup/bottle. We can replace plastic bottles in the grocery stores with glass bottles, replace plastic bags with multi-use shopping bags, plastic utensils with metal utensils and even use a reusable straw. These are some of many options that can help us give up plastic.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/02/year-plastic-pollution-clean-beaches-seas> The plastic polluter won 2019, but we’re running out of time

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/22/travel/tackling-the-plastic-problem-one-city-or-country-at-a-time.html> Tackling the plastic problem one city (or country) at a time

“there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish in 2050.”

<https://www.businessinsider.com/plastic-in-ocean-outweighs-fish-evidence-report-2017-1>