

Introduction

Where does our waste go? Recently, news hit the headlines that one of China's mega dumps was **filled 25 years early**. Instead of having enough space to last until 2044, it was declared full this year. That's A LOT of trash!!

Waste reduction is very important. To help achieve it, governments around the world have implemented new laws and policies to help protect our environment. From California to Europe and beyond, communities have taken action—like banning the use of plastic bags and enforcing participation in recycling programs. Companies, restaurants, and food delivery services are also limiting the distribution of packaging, straws, and disposable cutlery. Together, they have started a global movement to help save our planet.

What about you? Have you ever thought about where your snack wrapper goes when you're done with it? Or that every bandage your mom lovingly placed on your scraped knee is still out there in the world somewhere? What about that empty tube of toothpaste from last week or the pair of jeans you outgrew last spring? What happened to your toy camera or the old family car? Just because we don't see it, doesn't mean it stopped existing!

The 2020 USAGSO Zero-Waste Challenge is designed to help you think about all the things you and your family can do to help preserve our planet. Remember, environmental conservation isn't just about reducing waste either. It's about minimizing our use of resources too, like not leaving the tap running when you brush your teeth, turning off lights, and unplugging chargers when they're not in use or using public transit to lower fuel consumption and air pollution.

This year's challenge invites you to adopt some of these actions and behaviors for a specific length of time. We'll be honest though - our hope is that you will take on more actions than required and practice them for them much longer than the challenge requires. If we are serious about helping the planet, we need to change our ways as best we can for as long as we can - maybe for a lifetime! And, if all goes well, your family might even save extra money each month by buying and consuming less!

If you want some extra help, here's a great article from Canada's Globe & Mail on [how to get started!](#)

Bonus Challenges: To further help the planet, get your family or troop to participate in one of these extra challenges!

Family Challenge: Go completely trash free for one week!

Most days we're oblivious to the amount of trash we generate. Whether it's a wrapper, receipt, cleaning container, and/or stir stick. Try to go one full week without generating any trash. You'll need to think before you act to determine if another approach would generate no waste. For example, can you tell the cashier you don't need a bag and carry your purchase home? Can you bring a reusable straw to the restaurant and avoid fast food with their single-use wrappers? At home, can you use a rag to wipe up a spill instead of paper towel?

We know it won't be easy, but see how well you can do. Some families only buy in bulk and from farmers' markets where the food has no packaging. They bring the items home in reusable tubs, jars, and bags. Other people make their own toothpaste and cleaning products, so containers from store-bought products don't end up in the trash. Plus, these homemade products don't contain harsh chemicals that can taint water and plants. It will be difficult to not to generate any waste, so if you do have a few pieces put them in a special pile. At the end of the week, reflect on what's there and consider what your family can do differently to avoid it!

Reward

While the true reward for this challenge is a cleaner, healthier place to live, every girl who completes the challenge will receive a patch, plus a reusable, travel utensil kit to help her reduce waste every time she's away from home!

Challenge Rules & Deadlines

Girls must complete the required number of activities for their grade level and take at least three (3) photos of herself completing activities. After, submit the [Zero-Waste Challenge Form](#) with the photos by December 31, 2020 to earn a patch and set of reusable travel cutlery. Girls may complete activities as a group, but each girl and should only count activities that they participated in.

The challenge is open to current girl members of USAGSO. Family members may participate in activities but are not eligible for patches or prizes. Girls may only submit one patch request. Zero-Waste Challenge activities must be completed between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020. All entries must be submitted by December 31, 2020 to earn patches and the travel utensil set.

Activity Requirements

- Daisy – 3 actions for 1 week
- Brownie – 5 actions for 2 weeks
- Juniors – 7 actions for 3 weeks
- Cadettes – 10 actions for 4 weeks
- Seniors – 10-12 actions for 5 weeks
- Ambassadors – 10-12 actions for 6 weeks

*This year we also have two bonus challenges that you can do in addition to the primary one - a family challenge and a troop challenge! See below for details!

Troop Challenge: Refuse to use!

In addition to the challenge requirements above, track how many times a day you can refuse something that would quickly end up in the trash. For example, if the museum you're visiting offers you a map of the exhibits, can you politely say no and take a photo of it to use instead? If a shopkeeper offers you a receipt, can you tell them you don't need one? And, of course, we all know to avoid taking a straw and plastic lid when we can! Keep a tally of how many times you refuse to take excessive and wasteful items to track your progress and your benefit to the planet. Start a competition within your troop (or school classroom!) to see who the most active conservationist is!

ZERO-WASTE ACTIVITIES

At Home

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Replace paper towel with rags to wipe up spills then wash the rags! <input type="checkbox"/> Use shopping bags for trash instead of buying garbage bags <input type="checkbox"/> Make homemade snacks to avoid store packaging <input type="checkbox"/> Use bars of soap instead of bodywash to avoid the plastic container <input type="checkbox"/> Use old envelopes and backs of paper for notes/scrap paper <input type="checkbox"/> Use beeswax wraps for leftovers <input type="checkbox"/> Use rechargeable batteries <input type="checkbox"/> Make an up-cycled gift <input type="checkbox"/> Sort and recycle your trash <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off water when brushing teeth <input type="checkbox"/> Compost leftover food | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use a plate to cover bowls of leftovers in the fridge instead of Saran Wrap <input type="checkbox"/> Wash your windows with newspapers <input type="checkbox"/> Make your own toothpaste and cleaning products <input type="checkbox"/> Replace sponges with washable dish cloths and cleaning rags <input type="checkbox"/> Make quick and easy meals from unprocessed and unpackage foods <input type="checkbox"/> Plant an herb or vegetable garden <input type="checkbox"/> Save fruit stickers on aluminum foil and use them instead of tape <input type="checkbox"/> Turn off lights and other electronics when not in use <input type="checkbox"/> Unplug chargers when not in use (they still consume electricity!) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use a handkerchief instead of paper tissues <input type="checkbox"/> Buy and use a menstrual cup instead of tampons and pads <input type="checkbox"/> Use a cloth napkin instead of paper <input type="checkbox"/> Wrap presents in reusable colored fabrics instead of paper <input type="checkbox"/> Use wool dryer balls instead of dryer sheets <input type="checkbox"/> Donate old electronics and buy second hand <input type="checkbox"/> Use a bamboo toothbrush <input type="checkbox"/> Use eco wash on appliances <input type="checkbox"/> Line dry clothes <input type="checkbox"/> When something breaks repair it, instead of buying new | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Make your own soap <input type="checkbox"/> Make your own playdough <input type="checkbox"/> Make recycled DIY crayon from broken stubs <input type="checkbox"/> Make a grocery bag out of an old t-shirt <input type="checkbox"/> Use socks and old clothes for rags <input type="checkbox"/> Use shoe boxes, peanut butter jars, and similar for storage <input type="checkbox"/> Buy fruit and make your own juice <input type="checkbox"/> Make stovetop popcorn instead of microwave <input type="checkbox"/> Eat less meat! <input type="checkbox"/> Learn about your local recycling rules and follow them. Don't contaminate your recycling by adding items that aren't allowed. |
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In the Community

- Purchase a reusable water bottle or refill a single use container when going out.
- Get some gloves and do 1 hour of trash pick-up at a local park or public space
- Bring your own mug when buying a drink to go
- Don't order take out from restaurants that use Styrofoam
- Bring cans or other recyclables to a refuse center
- Instead of taking a handout, brochure or copy of a flyer, take a photo of it to keep on your phone
- Give away clothes, toys and items you don't want instead of putting them in the trash
- Replace disposable cutlery, cups and plates at Girl Scout events with reusable ones
- Take leftovers home
- Use public transport instead of family car
- Say no to straws
- Bring your own to-go containers
- Plan a zero-waste picnic for your family, friends or troop!
- Head out in nature - go berry picking or mushroom hunting. What seasonal foods can you find?
- Use the library to borrow books and media instead of buying

Out Shopping

- Shop at a thrift store
- Purchase vegetable from a farmers' market
- Buy bulk products that don't come in packaging
- Bring your own reusable bags to the store
- Tell the cashier you don't need a receipt
- Use mesh bags instead of plastic to put fruits and veggies in at the store
- Don't buy bottled water
- Buy better quality products that last
- When ordering ice cream ask for a cone instead of a bowl!
- Opt for reusable products
- Buy toilet paper that comes wrapped in paper, not plastic
- Find products that come in refillable containers
- Ask the deli counter if you can take your sandwich home in your own container

At School

- Bring snacks/lunch from home in a reusable container instead of using foil or plastic wrap
- Pack reusable utensils with your lunch
- Wash and re-use Ziploc bags - they last a really long time!
- Walk or bike to school
- Pack trash-free lunches
- Take notes on a laptop instead of paper
- Take photos of important info instead of making photocopies
- Don't use glitter in crafts - it's a microplastic!
- Talk to your school about going reducing waste. Discuss reducing paper, using non-disposable plates, trays, and cutlery in the cafeteria, sorting trash, emailing flyers instead of printing them.

When Traveling

- Bring your own meal on an airplane
- Bring your own cup for water on a plane
- Use an electronic ticket instead of printing a paper one
- Don't take paper maps or from the hotel, take a photo

