** A Sustainable Choice: Giving New Life to Single-Use Plastic Products (SUPPS)**

For years we have enjoyed the convenience of single-use plastic products (SUPPs) But now we better understand their impact on the environment and ultimately to our health.  The life cycle of SUPPs is a straight line that usually ends in a landfill, incinerator or as litter.  Only a tiny percent is ever recycled. There are movements now to shift to more sustainable or reusable replacements, or even to ban some SUPPS.

However, experts say that a ban on SUPPs is not the total solution. “It is the single-use nature of products that is the most problematic for the planet, more so than the material that they’re made of,” says Claudia Giacovelli, of the United Nations Environment Programme Life Cycle Unit. Single-use alternatives made of other materials are not intrinsically better, meaning that they also should be reused when possible. For example, you would have to use a paper shopping bag four to eight times to have a lower environmental impact than one single-use plastic bag. **The more any product is reused, the lower its environmental impact.**

So, if you can’t avoid using a SUPP, the best action is to find a way to re-use it instead of tossing it immediately into the trash. If you give that SUPP a second, third or even fourthh life, it can significantly reduce your environmental footprint as well as the demand for virgin plastic.  Here are a few ideas:

* Hotel mini-bottles of shampoo, conditioner, etc. - refill and reuse them on your next trip.
* “Pretty” pump bottles for hand or dish soap, and spray bottles of cleaning products: refill from the largest refill size you have storage space for.
* Used toothbrushes - use for cleaning grout between tiles; donate to wildlife shelters for brushing the fur of baby mammal rescues.
* Zip-lock style plastic bags - rinse, dry & reuse. They have a multitude of organizational or storage uses besides holding food!
* The plastic sleeves your newspaper is delivered in - Save & use for cleaning up after your dog’s potty walks.
* Buy berries in cardboard baskets.
* Plastic bags for loose produce - turn them inside out and let dry.  Then take them back to the grocery aisle and use them again.
* Yogurt tubs and other #5 plastic tubs - use for storing leftovers. These are also good for freezer storage of pre-cooked soups, chili or other foods.  Be sure to label them!
* Sturdy take-out containers with snap-on lids - use for packing lunches or sending food home with guests.  The ones of greater diameter also make great house plant saucers.
* Varied sizes of plastic containers with sturdy lids - use to organize batteries, paper clips, safety pins, rubber bands, nuts & bolts, screws & nails…
* Bubble wrap - stash away for future use in moving, shipping, or transporting fragile items.

One major exception to the “reuse as much as possible” rule: plastic water bottles made from Plastic 1 (PET) should not be used again for drinking water.  They are prone to bacterial growth and chemical leaching.  But don’t despair if you somehow end up with a plastic water bottle. You could recycle it, but they can also be used again in many other ways!  They can become birdfeeders, terrariums, piggy banks, pencil cases, and much more.

Check here: [20 Genius Ways to Reuse Empty Plastic Bottles](https://www.thespruce.com/ways-to-reuse-plastic-bottles-4584358). Also: [30 Ways to Reuse Plastic](https://www.fairharborclothing.com/blogs/news/30-ways-to-reuse-plastic)

*Kathleen Geist for the Sustainability Committee*