



# WasteFreeLunches.org

Reduce. Reuse. Recycle. Rot.

## Welcome!

If you're interested in learning more about waste-free lunches, you've come to the right place. Our aim is to provide you with all the information you need to participate in (or to start!) a waste-free lunch program at your school or place of employment. If you have information to share, we'd love to hear from you!



## What's the Problem?

As Americans we have come to depend on the many convenience products that are available to us, and nowhere is this more evident than in the school lunch room.

Most parents pack lunch items in single-use plastic bags, aluminum foil, or wax paper, or they purchase single-serving items that come in their own disposable package. Admittedly, these products are extremely convenient, but what is the environmental cost to a country that relies so heavily on them? Landfills are full and overflowing. Incinerators pump contaminants into the air. Communities are battling over who will accept the nation's trash. We all enjoy these conveniences, but few of us are willing to allow new landfills and incinerators to be built in our own backyards.

Much of the trash we generate comes from the packaging on the food we buy, and lunch foods are no exception. In fact, it has been estimated that on average a school-age child using a disposable lunch generates 67 pounds of waste per school year. That equates to 18,760 pounds of lunch waste for just one average-size elementary school.

## What can we do to reduce lunch waste?

Start local! Start a waste-free lunch program at your school. Many schools across the country have begun to do so, and they're truly making a difference!

**For More Information visit [www.wastefreelunches.org](http://www.wastefreelunches.org)**



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## **Understanding the Problem**

### ***The Typical Lunch:***

If you walk around at lunchtime and take a good look at the lunches our children bring to school, here's what the typical lunch will look like:

- sandwiches in disposable plastic bags
- fruits and vegetables in plastic bags
- prepackaged chips, cookies, fruit bars, granola bars, cheeses, and fruit leathers
- single-use yogurts, applesauces, and puddings
- crackers, pretzels, chips, and other snack foods sealed in plastic bags
- disposable juice boxes, juice pouches, juice cans, water bottles, and milk cartons
- plastic forks and spoons
- paper napkins
- reusable lunchboxes and disposable paper and plastic bags

### ***A Waste-free Lunch:***

- sandwiches and other main dishes, fresh fruits and, fresh vegetables, and treats in a reusable lunch container or containers
- cloth napkins
- stainless-steel forks and spoons
- reusable drink containers
- reusable lunchboxes

In this scenario very little trash is generated because foods are bought in bulk or in larger packages. The packaging is left at home for reuse or recycling. Food waste also decreases because with a reusable lunch container, children can re-pack uneaten food instead of dumping it, packaging and all, into the school trash can.

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