

## Packaging



It's difficult to get away from packaging these days. Every time we go shopping we are presented with tightly packaged mass produced items, accompanied by seemingly unnecessary cardboard, polystyrene, plastic containers, and so on.

The outcome of excess packaging on our goods is increasing tonnes of waste going to landfill, and a waste of resources. In turn, all of this contributes to climate change and creates a space shortage, and smelly, unattractive piles of rubbish. Not only that, but trading standards officials suggest that packaging items in an over the top fashion is in fact misleading customers by over inflating their expectations before they buy.

There have been recent moves to curb this growing trend following consumer outcry at the amount of unneeded packaging on products. Many of the major supermarket retailers are making commitments to reducing product packaging; while other shops are charging extra for carrier bags in order to promote the idea of bringing and re-using your own. There is, however, still far to go before shopping is more sustainable.

Here are some top tips to having a packaging free lifestyle...

### Avoid

The best way to protest against packaging is through your power as a consumer- if it's over packaged, simply don't buy it. If enough people take a stand, then businesses will have to react by changing their policies. Complain to your local supermarket or shop, which will be able to contact the suppliers and tell them consumer views.

Or why not take the advice of environment minister Ben Bradshaw? He suggested that you should leave extra packaging on the supermarket shelf. If it's

left in the shop, it's their responsibility to dispose of it, and, as businesses pay for the tonnes they throw away, they'll be more likely to want to reduce the packaging that's there in the first place.

### Reuse

If you do have to take packaging home, try, as much as possible, to reuse the items you bring back with you.

Instead of using carrier bags each time you do your shopping, use bags again by bringing them along with you from home. Currently, 100,000 tonnes of plastic bags are thrown away a year needlessly, equivalent to the weight of 70,000 car. Each bag takes 100 years to decompose. Alternatively, invest in a shopping or 'bag-for-life' carrier bag – not only are they better for the environment, they are much stronger and less likely to break than free carrier bags.

Or you could be more inventive with the materials that are reused- from using empty cartons as flower or herb pots to making a lunchbox from an icecream tub.

### Recycle

Of course, it's inevitable that you'll be left with a certain amount of packaging however much you try to minimise the quantity. It's vital that bear the environment in mind when you dispose with your items by, where possible, recycling the waste items.

Contact your council to find out about your local facilities. Most councils now operate a doorstep collection service, which means there's no excuse not to separate your recyclable items and dispose of them in an environmentally friendly manner.

