

“Cutting Plastic Consumption”
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Given the weight of evidence available, we may have a major plastic problem. So, how effective is recycling plastic at reducing plastic production and waste? Not very effective. This does not mean that plastic recycling should end but it means that plastic consumption should take a massive nose dive. The plastic codes on the bottom of plastic items (a triangle of arrows surrounding a number) actually indicate what type of plastic an object was made from. They do not mean that the plastic is necessarily recyclable. The American Chemistry Council's fact sheet on the different recycling codes and the post market uses of different types of plastic only lists two of seven types as able to go back into manufacture of plastic bottles; and only one of these can be recycled into drinking bottles. The other types can be recycled but they are often recycled into materials that cannot be recycled again (e.g., Styrofoam egg shell cartons). Almost every plastic drinking water bottle is made from virgin plastic.

Recycling plastic is not a solution to reducing the amount of plastic garbage. Cutting plastic consumption is the most effective action we can take to avert a global plastic catastrophe.

Even small changes can make a profound difference. An informative game to play is to list all plastics bought for one week. Then consider how much of that will be recycled, and how much of it will be recycled a second time. Now look for strategies to eliminate that plastic altogether in the future. Make a plan of how to avoid purchasing plastic at the grocery store. Buy reusable shopping bags. Take a wire basket to the store and put produce in it instead of

using plastic produce bags. Take your own containers to the deli (they can adjust the scale to the weight of your container). Take tupperware to restaurants for leftovers. Get a reusable water bottle and a reusable coffee mug. Keep reusable silverware at the office. Upgrade or repair plastic technologies (e.g., mp3 players, cell phones) instead of buying new ones. Use compostable garbage bags, or none at all. There are many sources available on the internet for information on plastic consumption and reduction. Some good starters are 1. www.lifelessplastic.blogspot.com and 2. www.lowimpactliving.com . Whenever possible, avoid plastic like the plague. Otherwise, the world will soon be drowning in it.