



Invasive Species Council of BC

HOW TO TAKE ACTION

# How to Pull the Plug on Plastic



## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT PLASTIC?

According to OceanWise, about 348 million tonnes of plastic is produced annually and only about 9% of plastic waste is properly recycled. The rest enters landfills or makes its way into the ocean, where it remains in the ecosystem for an indefinite amount of time.

## HOW DOES THIS PROBLEM RELATE TO INVASIVE SPECIES?

Plastic pollution is known to harm marine and terrestrial life through entanglement, ingestion and habitat destruction. However, as the amount of plastic litter entering the ocean increases, the risk to transport marine animals, plants and microbes into new habitats also increases. These species may become invasive without normal pathogens or predators in these new environments to control their population growth.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Almost half of plastic produced is for packaging and single use items and likely can be found in waste baskets throughout your home. To make a difference, we need to analyze how we are using plastic products and where we can improve. We can do this by conducting a plastic audit and creating personal goals to limit our plastic use. To do this, collect and sort through your garbage from throughout your home (kitchen, office, bedroom and bathroom).

Side note: To be effective, go through your garbage at least twice. Once as a baseline and at least one other time to see your improvements!

## SUPPLIES

- » Your household garbage and recycling (about one week's worth).
- » A space to sort your garbage.
- » Gloves and/or tongs to handle your waste safely.
- » Cleaning equipment to sanitize your sorting station when you are finished.
- » A pencil and paper to record your audit.

## STEPS

1. Create a table, like the one below, to record your observations. Create a table for each room you collect garbage from.
2. Take your garbage to your designated sorting area.
3. Using tongs or wearing gloves, thoroughly inspect your garbage.
4. Using your data table, categorize and record each piece of garbage.
5. Clean and sanitize your sorting area.
6. Analyze and reflect on your results.

## DATA CARDS

Audit # \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Room: \_\_\_\_\_

ITEM	TALLY	TOTAL

Items you are looking for include (but are not limited to): Clothing, shoes, bottle caps, PPE (masks and gloves), food wrappers, plastic straws, feminine hygiene products, balloons and many more! Don't forget, you can add as many lines as you need to.

Some questions to consider after you have finished sorting:

- » At the time of the audit, how plastic wise were you?
- » How many days of garbage are you looking at?
- » How many people contribute to this garbage?
- » What plastics show up the most in your garbage?
- » What goals can you set for yourself to reduce them?



## AFTER THE AUDIT

Now that the audit is complete, did you find anything that surprised you? Now is the perfect time to set some reduction goals to really pull the plug on plastic. Need some inspiration? Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- » Love going out for coffee or tea? Instead of using plastic-lined disposable cups, bring your own mug!
- » Wanting to try that new takeout restaurant? Bring your own reusable container!
- » Love water? Use a reusable water bottle instead of purchasing a single use plastic bottle.
- » Shred the six-pack! Opt for a soda brand that uses compostable rings or buy a 2L bottle to avoid unnecessary waste.
- » Banish sandwich baggies! Instead purchase reusable bags. Many reusable sandwich bags are dishwasher friendly, making cleanup a breeze!
- » Mastered these sustainable ways of living? Host your own plastic cleanup workshop!