

Plastic bags – what can we do?

Do you use grocery bags for lining bins and wonder what you will do when they are no longer handed out at the check-out? Or are you looking for better options for plastic bin-bags to line your bins? Or are you wondering how to avoid small plastic produce bags? The information below contains practical ideas to answer these wonderings:

Lining your (kitchen) bins:

If you're up for the challenge and want to eliminate plastic bags from your landfill contributions, then skip to the bit about using **Alternatives to Plastic Bin Liners**. If you aren't quite there on your eco-journey, then the obvious alternative is to buy bags intended for lining bins. These are made of thicker plastic and bag-for-bag will add more plastic to landfill, but it is unlikely that you will use as many bin-liners as grocery bags. A family that recycle as much as can be recycled* (and compost/worm farm) will generate little landfill – possibly only 1-2 grocery bags full a week (= 1 bin liner bag); this is far less than the number of bags this family would get a higher number of grocery bags in a weekly shop. It is true that purpose-made bin bags are made of thicker plastic so Be aware that bags labelled as degradable are not *biodegradable*, so do not breakdown into nutrients in the soil/landfill, but rather are designed to fragment into tiny pieces.

*And remember that you can reduce your landfill contributions by recycling “soft” plastics including pasta packaging, bread bags, broken “green” bags, chip packets etc. through RedCycle at your local Coles. See <http://www.redcycle.net.au/> for more and about what plastics you can recycle with them – it's not limited to the recycling of grocery bags or packaging from Coles food, as Coles don't own or operate the company! There is currently only so much demand for the products they manufacture, however, so reducing your consumption of plastic packaging is still preferable.

Alternatives to Plastic Bin Liners:

If your council is agreeable to allow you to put all landfill waste into your bin without containing it in some form, you can just eliminate a liner – and get into the habit of washing the bin regularly. Indeed, for bathroom/bedroom/office bins, a liner is generally not necessary. If you are unlikely to wash your bin(s) out regularly, or if your council requires rubbish to be contained by something you can use newspaper. See this video for how to: [how to make a newspaper bin liner](#)

Alternatives to Plastic Produce Bags:

Large items: such as apples, potatoes etc. can be piled up on the conveyor belt and put straight into your reusable bag. If this causes you embarrassment, then head to the self-serve area and build carrot/apple/potato pyramids on the scales! Or, bag them up in reusable produce bags: [reusable produce bags](#). Or make your own from very lightweight fabric using a simple drawstring bag pattern, or use net bags designed for washing delicates/lingerie. Whilst many of these are made from synthetic materials, the fact that they are reusable makes them a far better alternative.

Small items: such as beans and snowpeas can be temporarily put in your reusable bag so they don't fall through the trolley/basket and then transfer to the conveyor belt/scales as above, or you could use a paper mushroom bag – be sure to let the cashier know that they're not mushrooms! Better than the mushroom bag option would be to use the reusable produce bags mentioned above.

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