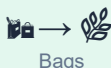
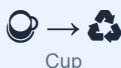




Bottle



Bags



Cup



Food



Paper



Plan

Quick Swap Guide

Simple lower-waste swaps for everyday life.

A companion tool for the Ed2S 30-Day Zero Waste Challenge

"Start with what feels realistic."

7
Pages

4
Categories

20+
Swap Ideas

Action
Planner

"Lower-waste living works best when it feels realistic."

Created by Education2Success · Education2Success.org



How to Use This Guide

"The most useful swap is the one you will actually keep using."

Ed2S Quick Swap Guide — Core Principle

You do not need to make every swap.

This guide covers a lot of ground, that doesn't mean you need to change everything at once. Read through it, notice what resonates, and choose what fits.

Start with what you already own.

The most sustainable option is almost always using what you already have. Before buying any new reusable product, check whether you already own something that works.

Focus on one or two changes at a time.

Trying to change too much too fast is one of the main reasons habits don't stick. Pick the easiest win, build that into your routine, and add more when you're ready.

Progress, not perfection.

Some disposable items may still make sense in certain situations. The goal isn't a flawless zero-waste life, it's reducing waste where it's realistic for your life right now.

Best way to use this guide:

1. Circle the swaps that feel easiest for your routine.
2. Pick 1–3 to try this week.
3. Ignore the ones that don't fit your life right now.
4. Revisit later as your habits grow.

Using what you already own is often the best first step, no new purchases required.

Everyday Carry Swaps

Simple swaps for items you use away from home every day.



Common habit

Disposable plastic water bottle

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Use a reusable bottle you already own
- ▶ Refill at home before leaving the house

Why it helps: Reduces single-use drink container waste and saves money over time



Common habit

Plastic shopping bags

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Use a reusable tote bag
- ▶ Keep one in your backpack, car, or by the door

Why it helps: Reusable bags last for years and replace hundreds of disposable bags



Common habit

Disposable coffee cups

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Use a reusable mug or tumbler when practical
- ▶ Drink at home before leaving if that's easier

Why it helps: Coffee shop cups are rarely recycled due to plastic lining



Common habit

Plastic utensils from takeout

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Carry a reusable utensil set
- ▶ Decline utensils when you already have access to some

Why it helps: Refusing utensils you won't use is the easiest single habit on this page



Common habit

Printed receipts you don't need

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Say no to printed receipts when possible
- ▶ Choose digital receipts if offered

Why it helps: Small habit, easy to start, zero cost, zero effort



Common habit

Extra napkins and condiment packets

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Take only what you actually need
- ▶ Use what you already have at home first

Why it helps: Reduces packaging waste that often goes unused

Reflect: Which everyday carry swap feels easiest for you to start with?

Kitchen and Food Swaps

Food waste is one of the most impactful and most improvable categories.

 Common habit Single-use plastic food storage bags	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use reusable containers you already own ▶ Jars, lunch boxes, or washable storage options all work <p>Why it helps: Containers can be used thousands of times vs. once</p>
 Common habit Plastic wrap for covering leftovers	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use containers with lids ▶ A plate placed on top of a bowl also works perfectly <p>Why it helps: Containers keep food fresher and are easier to stack</p>
 Common habit Throwing away leftovers	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Create a visible "eat first" spot in the front of the fridge ▶ Set a simple rule: leftovers before takeout <p>Why it helps: Food in sight gets eaten, food hidden in the back gets wasted</p>
 Common habit Buying too much food at once	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check the fridge before shopping ▶ Make a short list for just 3–4 meals <p>Why it helps: Planning reduces overbuying and forgotten food waste</p>
 Common habit Paper towels for every small mess	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Use a dish towel or cleaning cloth for quick spills ▶ Save paper towels for messes that genuinely need them <p>Why it helps: One cloth can replace hundreds of paper towels</p>
 Common habit Single-serve packaged snacks all the time	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Portion snacks from larger containers when practical ▶ Choose less packaging when options are similar in price <p>Why it helps: Bulk buying reduces packaging waste per serving</p>
<p>Tip: Food waste is one of the easiest areas to improve with planning and visibility, no new products required.</p>	

Reflect: *What kitchen habit creates the most waste in your routine right now?*

Shopping and Home Swaps

Better systems at home make lower-waste choices happen automatically.



Common habit

Impulse purchases with lots of packaging

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Pause before buying, do you really need it now?
- ▶ Wait 24 hours for non-essential items
- ▶ Ask whether you already own something similar

Why it helps: *Pausing is free and often the most effective waste-reduction tool*



Common habit

Buying duplicates because you forgot what you had

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Check your supplies before shopping
- ▶ Keep a simple home inventory list if helpful

Why it helps: *Knowing what you have prevents unnecessary purchases*



Common habit

Overbuying household products

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Buy replacements only when truly needed
- ▶ Store similar items together so you can see what you have

Why it helps: *Visible stock means you only buy what you need*



Common habit

Disposable cleaning wipes for every surface

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Switch to reusable cloths with a spray cleaner
- ▶ Save disposable wipes for specific cases if needed

Why it helps: *One spray bottle plus a few cloths replaces dozens of disposable wipes*



Common habit

Paper napkins at every meal at home

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Use cloth napkins or kitchen towels you already own
- ▶ Keep one near the table to make it a habit

Why it helps: *Cloth napkins last years and can be washed with regular laundry*



Common habit

Using convenience items because nothing is ready

→ **Try this instead**

- ▶ Prep one simple low-waste setup the night before
- ▶ Fill your bottle, wash a container, or place bags by the door






Why it helps: *Five minutes of setup removes the main barrier to low-waste choices*

A better system often reduces waste more than good intentions alone.

Reflect: *What home or shopping habit could improve most with a better system?*

Eating Out and On-the-Go Swaps

Small adjustments to your away-from-home habits can add up quickly.

 Common habit Automatically accepting takeout extras	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ask for no utensils, no straws, or fewer extras when ordering ▶ Most apps and cashiers will accommodate a simple request <p>Why it helps: <i>The extras you don't accept can't become waste</i></p>
 Common habit Ordering more food than you can finish	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Order more realistically, or save leftovers sooner ▶ Split meals when it makes sense <p>Why it helps: <i>Reducing food ordered reduces food wasted</i></p>
 Common habit Buying bottled drinks while out	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Bring a refillable bottle from home ▶ Refill before leaving, most public spaces have water access <p>Why it helps: <i>One reusable bottle replaces hundreds of disposable bottles per year</i></p>
 Common habit Making wasteful choices because you're in a rush	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Prep one simple grab-and-go setup the night before ▶ Keep one reusable item with your everyday essentials <p>Why it helps: <i>Being prepared in advance removes in-the-moment friction</i></p>
 Common habit Forgetting reusable items at home	<p>→ Try this instead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Create a dedicated spot by the door for your reusables ▶ Keep one backup tote or bottle in your bag or car <p>Why it helps: <i>Systems beat memory, a visible spot is more reliable than a good intention</i></p>

Not Everything Has to Change

You do not need to swap everything at once, or ever.
 Some disposable items may still make sense in certain situations.
 The goal is to reduce waste where it is realistic for your real life.
 Start with what feels easiest, most repeatable, and most natural.
 Sustainable habits work best when they fit your actual routine.

Choose realistic swaps first. Consistency matters more than intensity.

My Easiest Swaps to Start With

Turn this guide into action. Choose what fits your life, not someone else's.

3 Swaps I Want to Try This Week

Swap 1	Swap 2	Swap 3
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

The swap that feels easiest: <hr/>	The swap that could reduce the most waste for me: <hr/>
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What usually gets in the way: <hr/>	One system I can set up to make this easier: <hr/>
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My reminder for the next 7 days: <hr/>
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This Week I Will Try To:

- ☐ Keep one reusable item visible and easy to grab
- ☐ Try one food-waste reduction habit
- ☐ Notice one disposable item I can avoid or reduce

You do not need a perfect zero-waste lifestyle to make meaningful progress.

The best swaps are the ones you can actually keep. Start small, stay realistic, and build from there.

Thank you for supporting Ed2S and helping make sustainability more practical, approachable, and action-driven.