

# 30 Days of Zero Waste Challenge



A guide to help you on your journey to  
a zero waste lifestyle

**LET'S WASTE LESS**

## Let's get ready to waste less

Welcome to the 30 days of zero waste challenge. Your task is simple. Read this guide, follow the advice contained within it and over the next 30 days see how much you can cut your waste by. After 30 days you will hopefully be inspired by what you have achieved to go on reducing your waste further.

### What do we mean by "zero waste"?

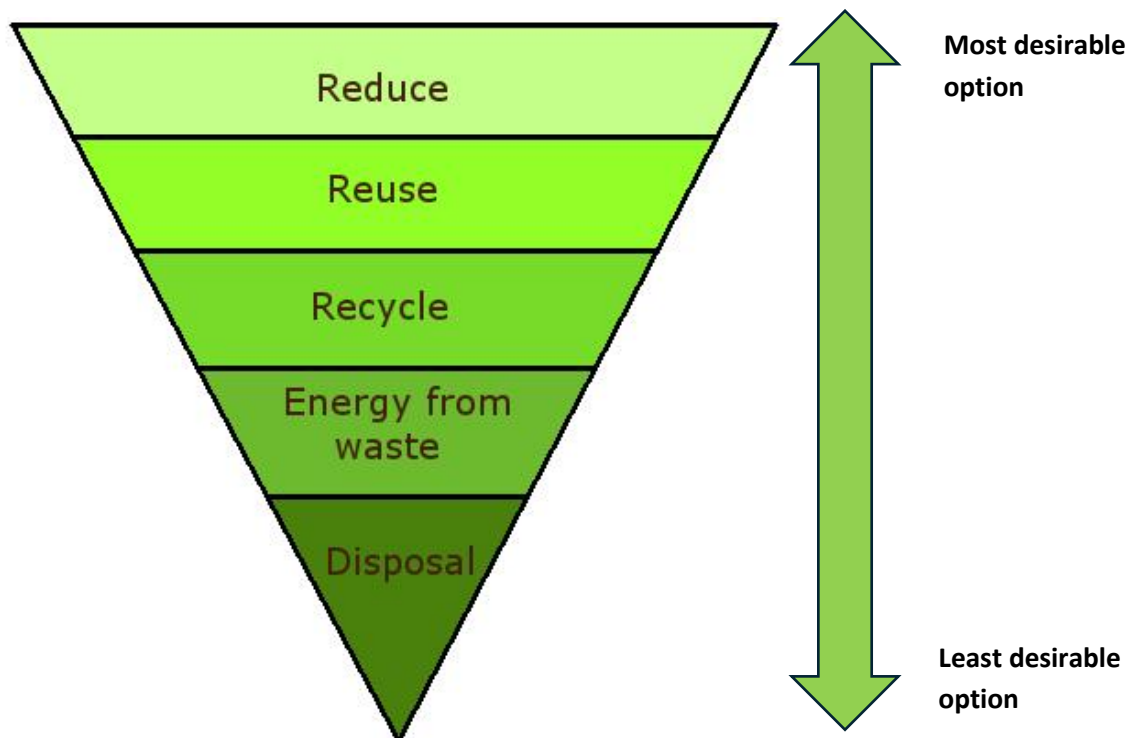
In its purest form a zero waste lifestyle means sending nothing to landfill or incineration. However, in reality this is quite a difficult thing to achieve as our society encourages a wasteful, throwaway culture.

Some people can do it with a little effort and dedication but it's not for everyone, particularly with how busy modern life is.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't try. The key is to keep it simple and do what works for you. Even if you can't get to zero waste, reducing your waste to the lowest possible level would still have a big impact.

Before we get started, let's introduce you to the Waste Hierarchy. Keeping this in mind will help you when considering how to deal with a particular item of waste.

### The Waste Hierarchy



Anything that can't be avoided or disposed of using one of these methods would need to go to the Energy from Waste Plant to be burnt to create electricity or to landfill.

With that in mind, let's get started.

Good luck 🍀

**The Worcestershire Waste Prevention Team**

## The contents of the average Worcestershire black wheelie bin:



Source: MEL Consulting 2023

## Step 1: Audit your waste

If you don't know what you are throwing away then it will be really hard to identify the changes you can make to reduce your waste.

So, to start the challenge you will need to perform a waste audit. It sounds more complex than it is. Here is what you need to do:

1. Carry on throwing away your waste and recycling as you normally would.
2. As you throw your waste away note down the item that is going in the bin. Include recyclable items as well as non-recyclable waste. Use a tally system to identify how often a particular item is being thrown away. See example below.
3. You will now have a visual representation of the waste you throw away and can identify the most common items and identify simple solutions to reduce your waste.

As this is the start of your journey towards a zero waste lifestyle the most important thing is to keep it simple and choose adjustments that are easy for you to make.

For example: Below is a basic waste audit. You will see food waste has been recorded separately in the waste section. Noting down the item of food and rough quantity will help you when you come to make changes.

WASTE		RECYCLING
<p><u>Food waste</u></p> <p>Bread: <math>\frac{1}{2}</math> a loaf</p> <p>7og karts: 1111</p> <p>Potato peelings</p> <p><math>\frac{1}{2}</math> bag carrots</p> <p><math>\frac{1}{2}</math> bag grated cheese</p> <p>8 crumpets</p> <p>1 litre milk</p> <p>1 croissant</p> <p><math>\frac{1}{2}</math> bag potatoes</p> <p>2 egg shells</p>	<p><u>other</u></p> <p>sawdust (at bathing): 1</p> <p>crisp packet: + + + + +</p> <p>chocolate wrapper: 1</p> <p>Takeway cup: 1</p> <p>Kitchen towel: + + + + +</p> <p>plastic film: 1111</p> <p>Tin foil: + + + + 1</p> <p>plastic toy: 1</p> <p>Bread bags: 11</p> <p>Clingfilm: 11</p> <p>Sanitary waste: + + + + +</p>	<p>Single use plastic drinks bottle: + + + 111</p> <p>single use fizzy drinks cans: + + + + + + + + + + + + 11</p> <p>plastic food packaging trays: + + + + 1111</p> <p>cardboard packaging (boxes etc): + + + + + + + 111</p> <p>paper (leaflets, newspapers, mail etc): 1</p> <p>Paper bags: + + + 11</p> <p>Tin cans: 11</p> <p>Milk carton: 1</p> <p>Toilet roll: + + +</p> <p>Glass jar: 1</p> <p>Toothpaste box: 1</p> <p>Aerosol can: 1</p>

We can see from this example two obvious and simple swaps would be to eliminate kitchen towels, plastic film and tin foil. On the recycling side making some simple lifestyle changes like reducing the amount of fizzy drinks being consumed and swapping single use plastic bottles for a reusable one would have a dramatic impact on this household's waste. Food waste is also an issue in this household and needs attention in the example above, accounting for about 20 per cent of this particular audit.

None of these swaps are difficult or time consuming and that's the key. Keep it simple and make the right adjustment for you and your lifestyle.

Repeat these waste audits throughout the challenge and use them as your guide to identify opportunities for change.

## **Step 2: Your simple swaps list**

We know life is busier than it has ever been which is why something like waste reduction can get pushed to the bottom of your list of priorities. Your journey to zero waste doesn't have to be like that though.

Just making simple swaps can make a big difference. Here is our guide to common household items and a suggested zero or low waste swap. Have a read through, choose the ones most relevant to you based on your waste audit and see what difference it makes.

**Aluminium foil** – swap for a silicone baking mat or beeswax wrap

**Body wash/shampoo bottles** – swap for bar soap and bar shampoo

**Bags, paper or plastic** – get yourself a reusable bag for life or a canvas bag

**Clingfilm** – swap for a beeswax wrap

**Coffee cups** – get a reusable one

**Cotton buds** – the advice from the NHS is not to put anything in your ear, so simply don't use them but if you have to then look for a compostable version.

**Disposable plates and cutlery** – avoid these and swap for standard plates and cutlery that can be washed. A paper plate takes eight gallons of water to make. A modern, energy efficient dishwasher uses between three to five gallons per load, so it's the sensible swap to make.

**Fizzy drinks/juice bottles** – reusable drinks cup is a simple swap instead of single use plastic juice bottles. If you like fizzy drinks then it's more difficult. Try and buy one large bottle of fizzy pop and use it to refill a single use one or reusable drinks cup. Not exactly zero waste but reducing it still.

**Floss** – look for compostable options. Most commercially popular brands of floss are plastic and coated with PFC which is also used for coating Teflon pans –hmm nice!

**Food packaging** – See our other recycling advice section on page 13.

**Loose produce bags** – such as those used in supermarkets for loose fruit and veg. Take your own reusable cloth bag

**Make up wipes** - swap for a flannel

**Menstrual products** – there are a variety of alternatives including menstrual cups or specially designed and washable underwear. Google Minivivi, which is a Malvern based company that produces all kinds of reusable menstrual products.

**Nappies** – opt for reusable ones. Worcestershire Nappy Library can help by lending you reusable nappies to trial so you can find the right one for you. Visit [www.worcestershirenappylibrary.uk](http://www.worcestershirenappylibrary.uk) for more information.

**Paper napkins** – swap for reusable cloth napkins

**Paper towel** – swap for a reusable cloth

**Pens** – Swap for a trusty pencil or a refillable biro or fountain pen

**Razors** – swap disposable ones for a safety razor.

**Sandwich bags** – replace for Tupperware, a tiffin tin or beeswax wraps.

**Straws** – just refuse them

**Tea bags** – switch to loose leaf tea and then compost. Tea bags can also compost but as most commercial brands currently contain plastic, they will leave a skeletal mesh in your compost when they break down which you will need to sieve out.

**Toilet paper** – recycled content or tree free options online. The wrapper can be recycled at your local supermarket see page 13.

**Tumble Dryer sheets** – you don't need them to dry your laundry, so don't use them

**Water filter** – swap the plastic water filter for a charcoal stick. Search online for tips on how to use it

### **Step 3: Focus on the bathroom**

If you're finding trying to reduce your waste all at once a little daunting then don't worry. An easy way to get started is choosing a room at a time and focusing on reducing your waste to zero. The easiest room to start with is the bathroom. Here is our guide to going waste free in the bathroom (or as close as you can).

#### **Make simple swaps first**

As with steps 1 and 2, the place to start is by making simple swaps like the ones below.

**Plastic shampoo and conditioner bottles** – swap for bar shampoo or bar conditioner. Lush sell a wide range but there are other stockists both online and on the High Street.

**Toothbrushes** – Get yourself a biodegradable one or even an electric rechargeable one will cut down on waste

**Deodorant aerosols** – you can get deodorants in tins or glass jars which could be reused for another purpose. Try searching online.

**Shower gel bottles** - swap for a bar of soap

**Toothpaste boxes** – You can get toothpaste that comes in a jar which can then be reused or recycled. Search online as there are various options.



**Hand soap bottles** – swap for bar soap.

**Bathroom cleaning product bottles** – you could try making your own. There are lots of suggested ideas available on various websites, just search online.

**Sanitary products** – try using a reusable menstrual cup.

**Razors** – swap disposable ones for a reusable safety razor

### **Maximise your bathroom recycling**

The bathroom is the one room in every household where people regularly throw away items that could be recycled. So if some of the above swaps are too much for you, then make sure you recycle everything you can. All of these can go in your recycling bin:

1. Shampoo bottles (rinse and leave the lid on)
2. Conditioner bottles (rinse and leave the lid on)
3. Shower gel and bubble bath bottles (rinse and leave the lid on)
4. Cardboard boxes e.g. toothpaste or soap boxes
5. Toilet roll tubes
6. Bathroom cleaner and bleach bottles (even the trigger spray dispenser can be recycled)
7. Aerosol cans (put the plastic lid in the bin separately)
8. Roller ball deodorants
9. Shaving foam can (put the plastic lid in the bin separately)
10. Hand soap bottles (put the pump dispenser in with your rubbish)
11. Moisturiser bottles (rinse and put the lid on)
12. Plastic wrapper from your toilet paper – this cannot go in your green bin at home but can be taken to any major supermarket and recycled at their carrier bag recycling point

One of the reasons people do not recycle as much from the bathroom is because they find going up and down the stairs too much effort. Putting in place a simple recycling system will help. Here are some ideas:

#### **Hang a bag on the back of the door**

If you're short on floor space, raise your recycling! There are some really stylish and pretty bags out there, why not choose one to match your colour scheme and hang it on a hook or the door handle?



#### **Hide your empties away in a cupboard or drawer**

If you aspire to have a streamlined bathroom, stow your empties in a cupboard or drawer until you've collected enough to take them to the main recycling bin.



### Grab a second bin

Make use of that wasted space under the sink and get a bathroom recycling bin for your plastic bottles, aerosols, toilet roll tubes and toothpaste boxes.



### Re-purpose a basket or box

Got a pretty basket that you don't dare throw away? Why not turn it into a bathroom recycling bin. If country classic isn't your thing, you could choose a storage box with a contemporary feel.



### Want it sorted right now?

If you prefer to get rid of your empties asap, pop them on the landing or in the dirty laundry basket as soon as you empty them and take them to the recycling bin next time you're heading downstairs.

## Step 4: Reduce your food waste

If you are like the majority of the people living in Worcestershire then about a third of your black bin will be made up of food waste. This is not only bad for the environment but costs the average family in Worcestershire with children about £810 a year.

If you can get your food waste under control then it takes you a long way towards a zero/low waste lifestyle. The biggest step on the road to reducing your food waste is to admit that it happens. Tracking your food waste as part of your waste audit will make you aware of how much you are wasting and why and then you can begin to do something about it.

The most common reasons people waste food are buying too much, allowing food to go out of date and cooking too much. Here are some simple things you can try to start reducing your food waste.

**Meal planning** – set aside some time to decide what you're going to cook each night of the week. This will help ensure you only buy what you need. Check what you have in your freezer and cupboards first and use that to make meals so that food doesn't go to waste.

**Make a list** – your shopping list can save you hundreds of pounds a year by stopping you overbuying or making impulse purchases.

**Plan your portions** – simply serving too much food is a leading cause of waste. All those leftovers you scrape into the bin is just wasted money. Try smaller portion sizes and if you or your family are still hungry afterwards you can always top up with a snack later. This online [portion calculator](#) will help.



**Check dates and store food correctly** – thousands of tonnes of food go to waste every year because food is incorrectly stored. Make sure you follow the labels on the packaging and follow the instructions. Food can still be eaten after a best before date if it looks okay, it just may not be at its best. Food should never be eaten once it is passed its use by date but can be frozen up until that date.

**Use your leftovers** – if you have leftovers then don't throw them in the bin. Store them in an airtight container and put them in the fridge or freezer for use the following day. You can find lots of recipe tips and ideas of how to use your leftovers at [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com)

**Practice first in, first out** - When you get home and unpack your shopping make sure you move older products to the front of the fridge, freezer or cupboard and put new products in the back. This will help you use up older items before they expire.

### **Get to know your freezer**

Your freezer is your friend when it comes to cutting food waste.

There are a surprising number of foods you can freeze including:

- Yoghurt
- Cheese (except soft cheese)
- Milk - this needs to be frozen as soon as possible after buying it. Tip a small amount away before freezing to allow for expansion when thawing. Thaw in the fridge.
- Meat (including leftover cooked meat)
- Fish
- Potatoes (boil for five minutes and then freeze. Thaw overnight when you want them and then roast the next day. Mashed potato freezes well too)
- Chillies - freeze them whole and then chop while frozen
- Bananas - peel and wrap them or place in an airtight container before freezing.
- Baked goods
- Bread – this makes great toast

The fridge is also the ideal place to store most of your fruit and veg (except bananas and pineapples, potatoes and onions). In fact fruit lasts up to two weeks longer in the fridge in the pack it came in than in the fruit bowl.

### **Become a compleATER**

Personal preference is one of the major reasons why so much food is going to waste across the UK.

By choosing not to eat peelings, stems, leaves, skins etc when they are perfectly edible, we are unnecessarily contributing to the 7million tonnes of food households across the country throw away every year.

For instance:

- Of the 710,000 tonnes of potatoes thrown away every year, 410,000 tonnes is peelings and skins
- 110,000 tonnes of crusts and end slices of bread are thrown away every year across the UK simply because of personal preference

If this sounds like you, then consider changing your habits as another way of reducing your food waste.

To help you get started, here are some of the things we peel or chop off and throw away when we could be using them:

- **Orange and lemon peel:** Candied peel will keep for six to eight weeks in an airtight container. Use it in fruitcakes, muffins or other sweet treats.
- **Pumpkin seeds:** Toss the seeds in a bowl with melted butter and salt, spread them out on a baking tray and bake for 45 minutes at 150°C/gas mark 2 for a yummy snack.
- **Cauliflower leaves:** Give them a wash and pop in a bowl with oil and spices. Lay them in a single line on a baking sheet and roast in the oven until crispy.
- **Carrot leaves:** Carrot top greens are not only edible but tasty and nutritious. Use them to make carrot top pesto with olive oil, garlic and parmesan and drizzle over your roasted carrots.
- **Cabbage hearts:** Simply shred them into salads, soups or stews.
- **Herb stalks:** Use up the stalks of parsley, coriander, basil and mint by chopping them into dips and sauces, blitz them into pesto or sprinkle onto savoury dishes.
- **Leek and spring onion greens:** Don't stop chopping when you get to the end of the white bit. The green ends are full of flavour and nutrients. Use them in the same way you would the rest of the stalk and wash thoroughly.
- **Leave the skins on your mash:** Cut whole, clean potatoes into small cubes and boil for 15 minutes, then mash with some butter and milk. You will never notice the skins but will get the nutritional benefits.
- **Apple peel:** When making apple crumble there's no need to peel. Just slice thinly or into small cubes
- **Don't forget bread crusts** – they are perfect to use like mini pizza bases. Just pile them with toppings for a super quick and cheap snack

You can find all of these tips, recipe ideas and more [www.lovefoodhatewaste.com](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com).

## Step 5: Get composting

If you haven't got a home compost bin yet then now is the time to get one.

Composting at home is a great way of minimising the waste you generate and helping the environment. In fact, composting at home for just one year can prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to all the CO<sub>2</sub> your kettle produces annually or your washing machine in three months.

It's not as complicated as people think. For beginners, a simple compost bin is the easiest and inexpensive way to start. Just sort out the right items from your garden and household waste, place them in your compost bin, wait about 18 months and your compost will be ready to use.

You can buy a compost bin through Worcestershire County Council. Visit [www.lets Wasteless.com](http://www.lets Wasteless.com) and click on the composting button or call Get Composting on 0844 571 4444.

### **How to make compost**

The key to good compost lies in getting the mix right. You need a good balance of "greens" and "browns" in your bin and to keep certain items out. If your compost is too wet add more browns, if it is too dry add more greens. Air is also essential to the process so give it a good stir to create air pockets.

<b>GREENS (high in Nitrogen)</b>	<b>BROWNS (high in Carbon)</b>
Grass cuttings	Crushed eggshells
Tea bags	Egg boxes
Vegetable peelings	Corrugated cardboard
Salad leaves	Garden prunings
Fruit scraps	Straw and hay
Old flowers	Wool
Nettles	Shredded paper
Coffee grounds and filters	Twigs and hedge clippings
Old bedding plants	Sawdust
Horse manure	Feathers
	Ash from wood, paper and lumpwood charcoal

These should be kept out of your compost bin.

Cooked vegetables	Diseases plants
Meat	Dog poo or cat litter
Dairy products	Baby nappies

## Other types of composting

### HOTBINS

The HOTBIN is a compost bin which allows you to compost all of your food and garden waste in just 30 to 90 days. Reaching a high internal temperature of between 40 to 60 degrees Celsius, the HOTBIN provides the necessary environment, unlike traditional cold composting heaps, to break down a wider variety of waste more rapidly. As well as being able to deal with everything a standard compost bin can, a HOTBIN can also take cooked leftover food waste, mouldy bread, fish, meat, chicken bones as well as chicken waste, dog waste, cat litter and much more.

Visit [www.hotbincomposting.com](http://www.hotbincomposting.com) for more information.

### Green Cone

Designed for use by an average family of up to four people, the Green Cone is a sealed unit which creates a rodent proof environment to decompose cooked and uncooked kitchen waste. This includes fish, meat, poultry, bones and cooked food scraps.

You do not get any compost from a digester. Instead, the material is broken down into a rich soil conditioner that is absorbed into the surrounding ground. As a small amount of residue is left, the Green Cone has to be moved every few years.

### Bokashi

This is a fermentation system using two buckets and Bokashi active bran. It is ideal for small households as it can be done right inside your kitchen and is perfect for dealing with food waste as you can add fruit, veg and meat scraps but not bones. Add food scraps to the first bucket with a sprinkling of Bokashi active bran, push the material down and seal the lid. Keep doing this until the bucket is full and then use the second bucket. The fermentation process will take approximately two to three weeks, after which you will have a liquid collected in the bottom bin, which can be diluted and used as a fertilizer for your plants.

Visit [www.letswasteless.com](http://www.letswasteless.com) for more information.

## Step 6: Reuse and repair

Have you got a broken household item? Don't just get rid of it, see if you can get it repaired first.

Worcestershire has a number of Repair Cafes where you can take broken items and they will attempt to get it working again. They are successful in the majority of cases.

Find your local repair café below:

### **Bewdley Repair Café**

**Location:** St George's Hall, Bewdley DY12 2EQ

**When:** Third Saturday every month (except August) 10am to 2pm

### **Bromsgrove Repair Café**

**Location:** All Saint's Church Hall. 6 Burcott Lane, Bromsgrove B60 1AD

**When:** First Saturday every month 2pm – 5pm

### **Droitwich Repair Café**

**Location:** Old Library Centre, Ombersley Street East, Droitwich WR9 8QS

**When:** Last Saturday every month 10am – 2pm

### **Kidderminster Repair Café**

**Location:** Kidderminster Youth House, Bromsgrove Street, Kidderminster DY1- 1PF

**When:** First Saturday every month (except August) 10am to 2pm

### **Malvern Hills Repair Café**

**Location:** Friends Meeting House, 1 Orchard Road, Malvern WR14 3DA

**When:** Third Saturday every month 10am to 2pm

### **Redditch Repair Café**

**Location:** Community House, 103 Easemore road, Redditch, B98 8EY

**When:** Last Saturday every month (except December) 10am to 2pm

### **Worcester Repair Café**

**Location:** Unity House, Stanley Road, Worcester WR5 1BE

**When:** Second Saturday every month (except August) 11am to 2pm

## **Donate, sell and pass on**

It's tempting when decluttering or having a clear out to just want to get rid of an item. However, if it's in good condition then even if it is junk to you, then it could still be valuable to someone else.

You can reuse items in a number of ways including selling them online, passing them on to friends or by donating them to charity shops.

## **Reuse organisations**

If you have larger, bulky items you no longer need such as furniture, then there are a number of reuse organisations across the county that can help. A list of some of them is available to download [here](#).

## **Step 7: Maximise your recycling**

Recycling actually comes pretty far down the waste hierarchy list but when you're starting out on your waste reduction journey, ensuring you are recycling everything you can is an obvious first port of call.

You are probably familiar with the range of items that can go in your green recycling bin. Just in case you can find a quick guide at [www.letswastesless.com](http://www.letswastesless.com) then click recycle and kerbside recycling.

However, there are lots of other recycling options available to you that you are probably overlooking.

**Other plastics** – Only non-black bottles, tubs, pots and trays should go into your green recycling bin. However, the plastic carrier bag point at your local supermarket will take a greater range of products. This includes plastic wrapping from toilet roll, bread bags, plastic frozen food wrappers and carrier bags. Check in-store for details and then simply keep these items to one side and take them with you when you next go shopping.

**Batteries** – Household batteries should never be put in your black or green bin. However, all retailers that sell batteries are required to have a battery recycling point. When they are used simply put them in a pot or tub and then take them with you to your nearest supermarket or retailer.

**Water filters and inkjet cartridges** – some supermarkets will also take these. Check in-store for details.

**Electrical items** – If you have an item that uses batteries, a mains plug or has a crossed wheeled bin symbol on it then it can be recycled at your local Household Recycling Centre. If you are buying a new electrical item though, then by law retailers must offer a take back service of your old item. This includes white goods. If you do not see a scheme promoted in-store then ask for details.

**Other hard to recycle items** - [www.terracycle.co.uk](http://www.terracycle.co.uk) offers an alternative way of dealing with hard to recycle items including crisp packets, confectionary wrappers and food pouches amongst other things. However, ask yourself do you need to buy these items in the first place? Is there a simple swap you can make?

**Use your Household Recycling Centre** – Your local Household Recycling Centre can take a greater range of items for recycling. Visit [www.letswasteless.com](http://www.letswasteless.com) and click on recycle and then recycling centres (Tips).

## **Step 8: Reduce the impact of your clothing**

There's one item we are probably all guilty of throwing in the bin and that's clothes. Every year the UK throws away an estimated 300,000 tonnes of used clothing and there is absolutely no need for it.

Throwing away clothing has a significant environmental impact as more than 5 per cent of the UK's annual carbon and water footprints result from clothing consumption.

But if we can extend the active use of our clothes for just nine months longer (giving them an average lifespan of about three years) we could reduce their carbon, water and waste footprints by 20 to 30 per cent.



**Buy second hand first** – for the duration of your 30 day challenge why not try buying no new item of clothing? Check out your local charity shops and online auction places to see what pre-loved clothing you can pick up. You'll save money too.

**Clear out your closet** – It is estimated £30billion worth of clothing is sat in wardrobes across the country. That's still waste when it could be out there, being worn by someone else and reducing demand for new clothing. So, have a clear out and then donate to your local charity shop or sell online.

**Wash with care** – washing clothes too much can seriously reduce their lifespan. Follow carefully the instructions on labels, try spot cleaning rather than washing the whole garment or click [here](#) for advice on how to freshen clothes without washing.

**Care and repair** – Are you one of the 77% of 18 to 34-year-olds that want to learn a new garment repair skill? If so click [here](#). Even if you're not in that age group have a look anyway.

**Get creative** – if you can't repair it, turn it into something else. Like turning your old denim into a [cover for your tablet device](#).

**Buy smarter** – If you have to buy new then choose clothes that are better made or easy to care for. You will find expert advice [here](#).

**Step 9:** Review and repeat

## **And that's all there is to it!!**

We realise there's a lot of information in this guide but remember it's not about doing everything all at once.

Keep it simple, do what works for you and use your waste audits as a guide. You'll be surprised how much you can achieve in just 30 days.