



So, you think that paper bags are more 'environmentally friendly' than plastic bags? Think again....

U.S. consumers are increasingly making decisions about what type of grocery bag they wish to use, or even if they wish to use one, based on the bags' environmental impacts. In addition, several counties and cities are making decisions whether to ban or tax grocery bags to reduce bag use. To help you make the smartest, most well-founded decisions possible, we offer these important facts:

- It takes more than four times the energy to manufacture a paper bag than it does to manufacture a plastic bag.
- Just 1 tractor trailer can deliver up to two million plastic grocery bags; 14 tractor trailers are needed to deliver that number of paper grocery bags.
- Most plastic grocery bags are now made from natural gas, an abundant and domestic raw material, not from oil.
- The production of a paper bag generates 70% more air pollutants, and 50 times more water pollutants, than a plastic bag.
- It takes 91% less energy to recycle a pound of plastic than it takes to recycle a pound of paper. Plus, plastic bags are recycled into useful patio decks, benches and other new plastic bags.
- Research shows that paper bags do not decompose in landfills any faster than plastic bags - properly designed and operated landfills eliminate the introduction of the water and oxygen necessary for any decomposition to occur.
- Compared to other litter, plastic bags are a very minor component. On land and in the water, it is the broader litter issue that needs to be addressed, not merely plastic or paper bag litter.

There are situations when the most appropriate choice for you may be a paper bag, a plastic bag, a reusable bag or even no bag. We hope we've helped you make the most informed choice possible.

What can you do?

1. **Reduce** your use of new bags – decide if you need a bag at all; consider buying bulk products that don't need a bag. Otherwise, choose bags that you can easily reuse or recycle.
2. **Reuse** both plastic and paper bags whenever and wherever you can.
3. **Recycle** the remainder.
4. And, of course, don't litter.

Also, be mindful that in the grand scope of things there are probably much larger, more important issues that society needs to address -- like hunger, education, energy, healthcare, fresh water, housing, and climate change, among others -- than grocery bags, or even 'paper versus plastic'.

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