



Chelmsford Climate Action Team

advocating Zero Waste initiatives
as well as **BUILDING WEATHERIZATION**, **HEAT PUMPS**,
SOLAR ROOFTOPS, and **ELECTRIC VEHICLES**
to help the Town of Chelmsford achieve



CARBON EMISSIONS
by **2050**

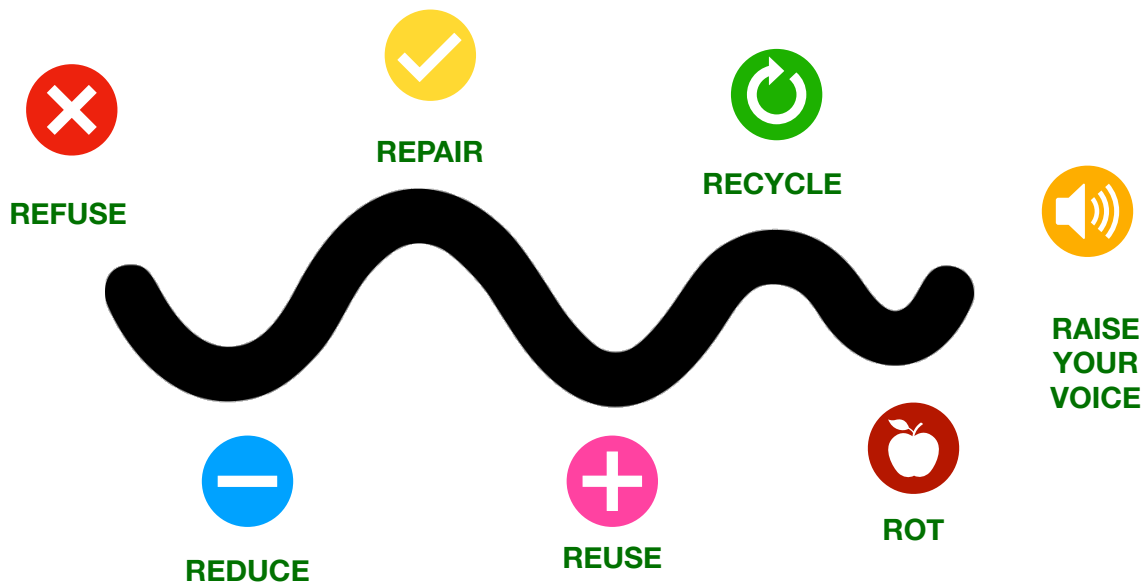
chelmsfordclimate.org

Going Zero Waste

– what you can do as an individual –

Meet the R stream:

Like a river, the R stream flows from its source (REFUSE), to its mouth (ROT), towards the ocean (RAISE YOUR VOICE).



Take a ride! You can join or exit the stream at any point. No expedition is too short. For best results, go all the way from source to mouth.

Do your best to get to the open ocean with a very lightweight load, as close to Zero Waste as you can get!

You will find that riding the R stream is good for the environment, good for your health, and good for your wallet!



The art of kindly declining:

The starting line on the R stream is refusing the variety of free stuff we are frequently offered: party favors, straws or lids with our drinks, salt and pepper bags, too many ketchup pouches, an array of utensils when we only need one spoon, flyers, bags for carrying a single item that fits in our hand or purse... Before accepting them, stop and think whether you really need them. What are the chances of you discarding them without even using them? If the answer is “high”, confidently say “no, thank you”.



Image by cookie_studio on Freepik



Shopping at your kitchen:

If we don't regularly check the bottom of our fridges, or the back of our pantry, inevitably food will go bad, and we will have to throw it away. So before you go to your grocery store, do what great chefs do: have a look around your kitchen, and plan a meal with all the products that are about to expire. Find an interesting new recipe which combines those ingredients. Add any extra ingredients you might need to your shopping list. Now you are ready to head to the store!



Image by Freepik



Bulk products and party size:

Whenever available, visit the bulk section at your grocery store. Grains, beans, cereal, nuts, trail mixes, meat, fish, and all sort of fruits and veggies can usually be bought in bulk. You can bring your own disposable bags and containers to take them home. Some other items –like snacks, laundry soap, canned tomatoes, meat...– can be found in value/party sizes. Once you come home with a big package of these goodies, divide them into smaller containers for convenient shelf storage, or freezing. In general, choose the item with less packaging, so at the end of the day there is less to throw away.



Image by tonodiaz on Freepik



DIY home cleaners:

Vinegar, baking soda, good old soap –preferably in bar format–, salt and water. That is all you need for the basic cleaning of your house! These products are inexpensive, and environmentally friendly. Buy them in big packages, and use them as ingredients for your cleaning mixes. Store the result in smaller reusable containers. For extra boost you could add lemon juice, or essential oils. Again, it is all about less packaging for the same cleaning performance. Try and see!



Image by Freepik



Mulching your garden with mown leaves:

Fallen leaves –specially when shredded– make excellent mulch that doesn't need any bagging. The leaves will decompose, so they won't only keep your soil moist, but it will also fertilize your plants. So, with just one gesture, you will be preventing both mulch bags and fertilizer bags from ending up in your garbage bin.



Image by Rob Cardillo on The New York Times



Extending the life of your electronic devices:

Most people upgrade their smartphones every 2.5 years. Consider holding on to yours for a little longer than that, let's say 5 years. Therefore, in 30 years you would have discarded just 6 phones instead of 12! Apply the same logic to laptops, watches, tablets, consoles... Think of what you could invest those savings on: streaming services, new games, subscription to movie theaters or orchestras, tickets to sports or concerts or theme parks, museum memberships...



Image by lookstudio on Freepik



Repairing all that is repairable:

Clothing, appliances, toys, electronics, furniture... Sometimes they just need a little extra care to be functional again. Look for a Repair Café, or a Fixit Clinic, or maker spaces events near you. Borrow sewing machines, and other tools from the library of things in your town. You will be preventing your precious item –and all the new packaging– from prematurely going to waste.



Image by Freepik



Beeswax wraps:

Much of what we usually wrap all sorts in kitchen foil, can be preserved using fabric covered in beeswax. They are washable, reusable, and can even be sealed with the heat from your warm hands. Moreover, if the fabric is made of plant fibers, they can be composted at the end of their useful life.



Image by RicaC on Pixabay



Reusable snack bags:

We can reduce the need of regular zipper bags when we opt for reusable ones. There are plenty of them in the market, in a variety of sizes, materials, and designs. They are washable, so they can be reused hundreds of times. You can even find special drying racks for them, making the cleaning process even easier. Sometimes a simple cloth bag, or a glass jar, or your last yogurt's plastic tub would do the job of carrying your snacks, or lunch to work or to school.



Image by Scott Suchman for The Washington Post



Reusable shopping bags:

Always carry empty reusable shopping bags in your car. That way they will be near when you need them. Try to choose bags made with discarded fabric, like old clothes, linen, or banners. You might be tempted to use recyclable, single-use bags. They won't go to the trash bin, right? Well, remember that recycling is an energy and water demanding enterprise. The less we recycle –the more we reuse or reduce instead–, the more of our precious resources will be available for other needs –like growing nutritious food to eat, and bringing it to your home.



Image by Freepik



Reusable to-go kit:

Prepare a reusable to-go kit, by collecting a spoon, a fork, a knife, chopsticks, a water bottle, a cup, a leftovers container, and a cloth napkin all inside a lunch bag. If you keep it in your car, it will always be ready for any meal occasion. It will also be practical to have an extra set of utensils directly in your handbag. Don't wait to find the perfect, fancy utensils. The regular ones you have in your kitchen drawer will do.



Image by Freepik



Cloth towels:

Cleaning up your home with washable cloth rags –preferably made of plant fibers, like cotton or linen– will definitely help reduce the waste produced by paper towels. Have a bunch of them at hand. Use them, and send them to your laundry basket often. Alternatively, you can keep using paper towels in combination with natural (organic), non-toxic cleaning products –like vinegar, baking soda, soap, lemon... When done, you can throw them on top of your compost pile.



Image by Freepik



Toiletries:

Give reusable razors a try, so you avoid wasting their handle every time you shave. Bamboo toothbrushes, so you can compost them when it is time for replacement. Toothpaste tablets, so there is not a tube to trash. Bars of soap, instead of liquid, to reduce in packaging. Did you know you can find shampoo and conditioner bars? Also, look for reusable diapers, sanitary pads, and menstrual cups.



Image by Freepik



A visit to the thrift store:

When you need to buy something –for yourself, or a gift for someone else–, go to a thrift store first. Give one more life to items others are not using anymore. For starters, used items usually come with less packaging than brand new items. But most importantly, you would be delaying their journey to a landfill, or an incinerator. That delay is good! There is also many apps out there for swapping, selling, or sharing your stuff (BuyNothing, Freecycle, Trash Nothing, Olio, Nextdoor...). Check them out!



Image by Freepik



Curbside recycling:

Not all that is theoretically recyclable, will get actually recycled. Ignore the chasing arrow symbol on the label –unless it is a how2recycle one. Recycling will only happen if there is a market for the recycled commodity, as well as the technology to extract it from the discarded items. That will depend on where you live. Check the Recyclopedia to find out how to properly dispose of each type of waste in our area. Please avoid wishcycling: if in doubt, throw it out!



Image by rawpixel.com on Freepik



Store bag drop-off:

Not every recyclable item goes in your curbside bin. Plastic film and bags, for instance, cause a lot of trouble when it gets to the sorting machinery. They are ‘tanglers’, and as such, they are completely banned from your bins –please don’t bag your recyclables. Instead, some kinds of plastic film and bags (only #2 and #4 resin types) can be collected at most grocery stores. You will find a drop-off bin for them close to the entrance of the store.



Images by how2recycle.info

RECYCLE



Bottle & can redemption:

The sorting process at a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) is a messy one, where part of the recyclable stuff gets inevitably lost in the process, and eventually ends up in a landfill or an incinerator. A good practice for increasing the recycling chances of the bottles and cans containing carbonated beverages is to visit a redemption center or retailer often, where these containers can be returned for a refund. Also, support the Better Bottle Bill, so more types of containers –water bottles, nips...– are accepted by the redemption program for a higher refund.



Image by Alan Zale for The New York Times



Composting your food scraps:

Discarded food is usually the heaviest kind of waste we produce at home. That means, when we are composting, we are significantly reducing our waste tonnage. Fruit and veggie scraps can be sent to an outdoor compost bin, or a compost pile. Scraps of animal origin, like meat and dairy, however, are more difficult to compost, and they will attract carnivores to your property. For those reasons, it might be wiser to hire the services of a composting company –like Bootstrap, or Black Earth– to handle them. You can apply the resulting compost to your yard or garden, and save in fertilizers –and their bags.



Image by Freepik



A friendly note to business owners:

If you happen to own a business, you could facilitate your employees journey down the R stream by taking a few steps. 1) Provide the break room with reusable foodware –including reusable tea infusers, and reusable coffee filters–, and a system to clean it up after every use. 2) Bulk buy supplies for tea, coffee, sugar, creamer, salt, pepper, etc. 3) Provide the break room with a waste station, to sort recyclables, and compostables out of the actual trash. You would be making a real difference!



Image by Freepik



Raising your voice:

Share your Zero Waste ideas and experiences with family and friends. Join a group advocating for waste reduction. Talk to your employer, and the schools in your district to encourage them to reduce their waste too. Write letters to manufacturers, retailers, and your elected representatives to let them know that you care about an efficient, respectful use of our resources. Just talk about it. Spread the word!



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