

# TRASH SHOULDN'T SPLASH



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## RESTAURANT OUTREACH MATERIALS

Scripts & Strategies for Restaurant Visits | Overview of Restaurant Partnership Program | Survey for Initial Restaurant Visit | How to Recruit Restaurant Partners | Examples of Restaurant Printables | Alternative Products Guide & Cost Calculator | Comparable Programs & Campaigns



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## SCRIPTS & STRATEGIES FOR RESTAURANT VISITS

### Strategy

The goal of *Trash Shouldn't Splash* is to build a team of problem solvers who care about ocean health and decreasing waste. Our major strength lies in the dialogue we promote between businesses, students, consumers, and researchers. Thus, it is critical that any conversation be framed as an offer to collaborate, rather than a lecture about what a person or a business is doing badly. We chose to approach food service businesses, such as restaurants, coffee shops and markets (hereafter referred to collectively as “restaurants”), to discuss their current use of single-use items such as straws and utensils, with an offer to help assess feasible ways to use fewer of these items. Because these changes are not always easy or cost-effective, we emphasize that *progress* toward reducing plastic waste is just as desirable as the end goal of minimal use of single-use items, especially those made of plastics.

### First Restaurant Visit

Our restaurant outreach program targeted all 11 food service businesses in Woods Hole, a village in the town of Falmouth, MA. For each visit, the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* team consisted of one adult and 1-3 middle school students from a group that started a local Skip the Straw campaign. The passionate and informed young voices often drew more interest than that of the accompanying adult, who served to gently guide the conversation. A script was designed to ensure that the initial visit to each restaurant was short, and the information concise and consistent.

### Script

**Bold** indicates speaker. Brackets [ ] indicate either anticipated responses or actions.

#### **Adult:**

Hi, we're here representing *Trash Shouldn't Splash*, a collaboration between Sea Education Association and Falmouth Water Stewards-Skip the Straw campaign. We are working to reduce the amount of plastic trash produced, some of which may end up in the ocean harming wildlife. We are interested in working with Woods Hole restaurants to reduce the amount of single-use plastic items used. Can you spare 10 minutes to talk with us?

[Yes:] Great, thanks!

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[No:] Can we set up an appointment to talk at another time? [*leave contact info*]

**Students: {personalize with your own favorite facts}**

Student #1: We're a group of middle schoolers who started Skip the Straw because we care about ocean health.

Student #2: Did you know that 90% of seabirds have ingested plastic?

Student #1: And also that 9 million tons of trash enter the ocean from land sources each year? You can picture this as 5 grocery bags of plastic trash piled up on every foot of coastline in the world being dumped in the ocean.

Student #2: We want to work with restaurants because you reach so many people and you would be a strong leader in sustainability efforts in Woods Hole.

**Adult:**

Right now we are gathering information about plastic items used in Woods Hole restaurants. Would you mind answering a few short survey questions?

[*Adult reads survey questions and marks answers*]

We are doing research into the costs and benefits of alternatives to single-use plastic items. Would you be willing to set up a time to talk with us again about alternatives that might work for your business?

[Yes:] When would be a good time?

[No:] If you change your mind, please contact us.

Thank you for your time and your help today. [*Leave contact info*]

**Students: {personalize your own "Thank you" message}**

Thank you for your help protecting our ocean.

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## Second Restaurant Visit

We found that all restaurants we visited were receptive to continuing the conversation and working together to reduce single-use plastics used in their business. We returned to each business, again with an adult and 1-3 students. Before the second visit, and every visit thereafter, it was very important to review information from past visits, such as with whom the group met (name and position, e.g. restaurant owner/manager/employee), data that was gathered, and what was discussed.

### Script

#### Adult:

##### ***First, re-cap last visit***

We're happy you're willing to meet with us and talk again. We're excited you're taking initiative to reduce ocean plastics by \_\_\_\_\_. [*refer to restaurant's specific strategies for reducing waste using information from interview notes/data collected from first visit*].

##### ***Second, offer help***

We want to share information on customer desires we've learned through the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* partnership research program: we have ideas we think you'll like for making ocean plastic pollution a thing of the past. We think restaurants can save money, learn about customer expectations, and benefit from great PR by joining the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* coalition.

Your time commitment can be the time it takes to tell us what you need in order to reduce plastic waste.

##### ***Third, explain why***

This student [*insert name*] can tell you why the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* project is something we all care about.

#### Student:

[*Student explains why they care about plastic waste, ocean health, and shares statistics on plastics harming marine life and amount of trash entering ocean each year.*

*For example:*

- ~ 90% of marine birds have ingested plastic
- 9 million tons of plastic trash enters the ocean from land each year, which you can picture as 5 grocery bags of plastic trash piled up on every foot of coastline in the world being dumped in the ocean.]

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## Adult:

### ***Fourth, explain what happens when restaurants sign on as partners***

These are our customizable guidelines for partnership in our ocean plastics reduction team [*share Overview of Restaurant Partnership Program document*]. Would you like to talk about ways to participate?

It would help the study if restaurants collaborate by allowing us to conduct a single-use plastics inventory, followed by cost-benefit research by *Trash Shouldn't Splash* to evaluate alternative products to reduce their single-use (plastics) footprint. A reduction plan might include suggested replacement of single-use plastic items with reusable (dine-in only), compostable, or biodegradable (wood, paper) items, for example.

*[If the restaurant is willing to work with us, ask if they are willing to continue with a few more questions today, or to schedule a time to return. Start with a few questions to continue the single-use plastics inventory that was begun at the last visit (see Single-Use Inventory List below).*

*In addition to addressing the following questions, it is important to listen and observe in order to clearly understand current practices and the factors that have led the restaurant to select the products they currently use (e.g., consumer demand, convenience, cost, food safety/health regulations, etc.).]*

## Adult and Students:

Thank you for your time and your help today. [*Leave contact info*]

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## Single-Use Inventory List

The following information would be useful to understand current practices and the types of single-use items used in the business.

- A sample of each type of single-use item the restaurant provides to customers (e.g., straw, utensils, cups, dishware, takeout containers, bags) so that we can research exactly what material these items are made of, especially for businesses using what they believe to be “biodegradable” plastic items. Explain that “biodegradable plastic” usually means the item will break down only in an industrial composting facility. It cannot be recycled, and will not break down in the environment.
- A buy list from restaurant suppliers with the name and cost of each product, or simply the name of their supplier with permission for us to contact to ask for this information about their business. We would like to know the quantity ordered per month or quarter and the cost per item.
- If not already in use, what are the obstacles to using reusable items (utensils, cups, dishware) for dine-in customers?
- Does the restaurant automatically include utensils in takeout orders? If not, do they ask before including? Or are they set out on a counter for the customer to take?
- Does the restaurant automatically put takeout orders into a bag?
- Does the restaurant automatically include a straw in drinks? If not, do they ask before including? Or are they set out on a counter for the customer to take?



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## OVERVIEW OF RESTAURANT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

### Introduction

*Trash Shouldn't Splash* is a local collaboration between *Sea Education Association* and *Falmouth Water Stewards-Skip the Straw*, working to reduce single-use plastics in our community. Single-use items (plastics, in particular) frequently become litter on beaches and in waterways. The fewer single-use items we use as a community, the less chance they have of becoming ocean pollution. We work with interested local food service businesses to develop individual, business-friendly strategies to reduce the amount of single-use (i.e., “disposable”) items. We also work to inform consumers about ocean pollution and to encourage them to consider alternatives to single-use plastics.

### Restaurant Partnership

As a *Trash Shouldn't Splash* Restaurant Partner, you commit to working with us to reduce the number of single-use items used in your restaurant through a dialogue to determine what would work best for your business and your customers. We offer this program at no cost, and we will provide display materials free of charge. Your commitment is the time it takes to discuss your needs and any obstacles to reducing plastic waste. Sharing information about the type and amount of single-use items you currently purchase would also be very helpful.

Here are some initial ideas to reduce single-use plastic items, which can be customized based on your current practices and needs:

- Offer single-use items only when requested by the customer. For example:
  - Provide straws only upon request by the customer (for dine-in & takeout customers).
  - Put a sticker on straw dispensers or a sign on countertops with “Skip the Straw” or “Choose to be straw free” (for takeout customers).
  - Provide a bag for take-out only after asking a customer, “Would you like a bag?”, or upon request.
  - Provide single-use utensils for take-out only after asking a customer, “Will you be eating at home, or do you need utensils?”, or upon request.



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- Switch to washable, reusable items, if possible.
- Switch to non-plastic single-use items, where appropriate, such as paper-based takeout containers, or bamboo straws or stirrers. Use compostable plastic only if your food waste is directed to an industrial composting facility. *Trash Shouldn't Splash* can calculate potential cost savings of switching from single-use plastic items to alternative products.
- Avoid polystyrene foam. This type of plastic cannot be easily recycled, but can be easily carried by the wind due to its light weight.
- Display printed materials to educate customers about ocean plastic pollution and the *Trash Shouldn't Splash* program.
- Wear *Trash Shouldn't Splash* buttons to highlight participation in the Restaurant Partnership Program. *Trash Shouldn't Splash* can provide a 5-10 minute staff training to prepare servers to answer questions customers may have about the program.

This list is just a place to start. The *Trash Shouldn't Splash* team welcomes your suggestions and further discussion for other ways to reduce waste. We will promote your participation in the program, as desired, in communication materials, including media articles and interviews.

## Metrics of Success

We hope to work with our restaurant partners to collect data to track the effectiveness of any practices you choose to implement. This could include:

- Follow-up visits to monitor progress in reducing customer use of single-use plastic items.
- Collecting quantitative data about single-use item purchases. For example, we could analyze invoice data about straw purchases before and after implementing straw-upon-request-only practices.

## How Can Your Business Benefit?

Through public surveying and local engagement, *Trash Shouldn't Splash* will inform you of customers' attitudes and concerns about single-use items. For example:

- Of more than 50 people surveyed at the Woods Hole Science Stroll in August 2017, 96% agreed that restaurants should only offer straws upon request, and 96% agreed restaurants should use fewer single-use plastics. We are conducting more surveys in town and will share the results with you.
- In summer 2017, *Skip the Straw*, one of the founding partners of *Trash Shouldn't Splash*, obtained unanimous Falmouth Conservation Commission and Falmouth Board of Selectmen support for its goal of working with residents, restaurants and schools to minimize use of single-use plastics in order to reduce ocean pollution.

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*Trash Shouldn't Splash* could potentially result in long-term cost savings from purchasing fewer single-use items. We can utilize a cost calculator to research potential cost savings before any new products are purchased.

Reducing marine debris will allow Woods Hole to continue attracting tourists and maintain local quality of life by keeping Falmouth beaches and waters clean and healthy.

We welcome your thoughts and suggestions, and hope to welcome you as a ***Trash Shouldn't Splash Restaurant Partner***.

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## SURVEY FOR INITIAL RESTAURANT VISIT

BUSINESS NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE/TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT NAME & POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_

CONTACT EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_ CONTACT PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

TRASH SHOULDN'T SPLASH REPS: \_\_\_\_\_

	Plastic	Paper	Bamboo	Glass	"Biodegradable" Plastic	Notes
Straws						
Stirrers						
Cutlery						
Cups						
Dishware						
Takeout						
Bags						

1. What are your main reasons for providing plastic items? Check all that apply.

- Cost                                       Habit                                       Convenience
- Customer Demand                       Take Out                               Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you open to another conversation about costs, benefits, and alternatives to single-use plastic items?

- Yes     No

3. Future appointment date/time: \_\_\_\_\_



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## HOW TO RECRUIT RESTAURANT PARTNERS

### **Focus on the Positives**

Focus on what restaurants are doing well, not just on where they need to improve. If we promote good practices, owners have an incentive to continue. If we criticize poor behavior, restaurant owners will not want to talk to us and may even stop eco-friendly practices.

### **Make it Easy**

Use language like “How can we help you?” and “What can we do for you?”. Don’t ask restaurants to come up with their own eco-practices unless they take the initiative themselves. If they perceive changes to be difficult or time-consuming, they may feel overwhelmed and they may not commit.

### **Use Peer Pressure**

If competitors and neighboring businesses have made steps to reduce single-use plastics, bring this up in a tactful way. For example: “Business X has our signage up in their straw dispenser area, if you’d like to see how it looks,” or, “This could be a straw-free street if you commit to straws upon request. Business Y just agreed to do so!” This puts mild pressure on businesses to keep up and “fit in” with their restaurant peers. However, make sure these comparisons are 1) true, 2) reasonable, and 3) tactful, so owners don’t get defensive, offended, or overwhelmed.

### **Accommodate their Schedule**

Try to schedule meetings when it is convenient to the business owner/manager. If you must drop in, go between busy meal times or during off-hours. Opening time is typically not busy and owners may be around, whereas closing time and the lunch rush are too busy to expect a conversation. In general, always ask what works best for their schedule. and ask for only 10-15 minutes. Then limit your visit to this agreed upon window, to show that you respect their time.

### **Be Persistent and Polite**

If an owner does not respond to emails or never seems to be in the store, ask hosts and waitstaff how they would suggest reaching owners. And then go back. And go back again. And send another email. Always say, “Thank you for your time” and smile.



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## ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTS GUIDE

### Should I choose “biodegradable” or compostable products for use in my food service business?

1. Do you currently send your food waste to a commercial composting facility?  
 YES  NO
2. Do the majority of your customers dine in your restaurant (rather than take out)?  
 YES  NO
3. If you have table service, are your waitstaff trained to properly sort compostable waste from recyclables and trash?  
 YES  NO
4. If customers dispose of their own waste, do you have separate containers and clear signage to properly sort compostable waste from recyclables and trash?  
 YES  NO

ONLY IF YOU ANSWERED “YES” TO ALL 4 QUESTIONS should you consider replacing single-use plastic items (straws, stirrers, cups, plates, utensils, etc.) with compostable alternatives in order to reduce the amount of waste produced.

**BEWARE!** The term “biodegradable” is ambiguous and misleading! The only materials that can be fully biologically degraded are those that are plant-based and not synthetic (e.g., wood, paper, bamboo) or specific plastics designed to degrade in a commercial composting facility.

**See reverse for cost calculator and additional resources**

## Cost Calculator

### Foodware Cost Calculator

Provided by the Product Stewardship Institute

<https://www.productstewardship.us/page/FoodwareCalculator>

This is a resource that restaurants can use to calculate the cost of switching between single-use plastic products and alternatives. You may offer this tool as a stand-alone resource. However, we *highly recommend* that you either do the calculations for the business or have a sit-down meeting with the owner and whoever is responsible for ordering.

## Additional Resources

### 3 Steps to Reduce Plastic & Benefit Your Business: A Guide for Restaurants and Eateries

Prepared by the Product Stewardship Institute

<https://www.productstewardship.us/page/RestaurantGuide>

This is a guide that restaurants can use when making the switch from disposable plastic items to more sustainable alternatives.

### ReThink Disposable

A program of Clean Water Action

<https://www.cleanwateraction.org/rethink-disposable>

ReThink Disposable is a campaign that does similar work to *Trash Shouldn't Splash*, with information on best practices that they have implemented in California food service businesses.



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## EXAMPLES OF RESTAURANT PRINTABLES



Here are two examples of restaurant partners who have chosen to display printable materials. We recommend placing materials where customers can see before they order, or near self-serve plastic utensil/straw stations.

You may download your own materials to print and distribute from the “Printable Campaign Materials” section of the toolkit.





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## COMPARABLE PROGRAMS & CAMPAIGNS

In the time since the concept behind *Trash Shouldn't Splash* was first born, many similar programs and campaigns targeting single-use plastics and waste reduction have been launched. Many of the campaigns that we researched had similar marketing strategies: to educate people about plastic pollution in our oceans, and to recommend alternatives to single-use plastic products. Some campaigns that specifically target single-use plastic straw use suggest instead using single-use straws made from materials such as paper or bamboo, or reusable straws made from metal or plastic. Some groups advocate shopping for reusable alternatives to other single-use plastic items, such as utensil sets, shopping bags, produce bags, takeout containers and other products. In offering diverse options, these campaigns do the work for consumers to identify alternative products.

Other campaigns were designed to help businesses and institutions reduce their waste, plastic and otherwise. One common strategy has been to promote “only upon request” policies, whereby restaurants and food service businesses stop automatically giving customers straws in drinks, or other single-use items that they may or may not need. It is human nature for people to accept the default option presented to them, such as automatically using a plastic straw when it arrives in a drink that has been ordered. Many campaigns seek to take advantage of this tendency by simply choosing not to offer these items unless they are requested from a customer, thereby changing the “default” option.

ReThink Disposable reported hesitation by some restaurants to implement these programs for fear of increased cost and angry customers. However, in three case studies, the restaurants *saved* money by purchasing fewer single-use items. For example, Lola's Chicken Shack (Alameda, CA) replaced single-use water cups with reusable cups and reduced the number of single-use items supplied to customers, such as lids and foodware. These changes saved them \$3,205 in one year and prevented 1,400 lbs of waste. In many cases, restaurant owners were more incentivized by potential economic benefits than by environmental concerns. Thus, even if the campaign values and goals are primarily environmental in nature, a focus on financial viability and potential benefit may be an important strategy when working with businesses.



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Effectively communicating the goals of plastic reduction relies on engaging and effective marketing, such as a catchy campaign slogan and a well-designed, aesthetically-pleasing campaign website. These should grab the attention of the potential audience and subsequently allow them to more deeply engage with the issue and consider proposed actions.

*Adapted from original work by SEA students: Kaylee Pierson and Kimberly Kusminsky*

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## Campaigns & Programs with Similar Goals to *Trash Shouldn't Splash*

### Programs with Toolkits & Guides for Restaurants and College/University Campuses

ReThink Disposable program, Clean Water Action

<http://www.cleanwater.org/campaign/rethink-disposable>

3 Steps to Reduce Plastic & Benefit Your Business: A Guide for Restaurants and Eateries, Product Stewardship Institute

<https://www.productstewardship.us/page/RestaurantGuide>

Ocean Friendly Restaurants program, Surfrider Foundation

<https://www.surfrider.org/programs/ocean-friendly-restaurants>

Green Restaurants Certification

<http://www.dinegreen.com/certification-standards>

Marine Debris Campus Toolkit, Trash Free Waters Program, Environmental Protection Agency

<https://www.epa.gov/trash-free-waters/marine-debris-campus-toolkit>

Plastic-Free Campus Manual, Post Landfill Action Network, University of New Hampshire

<http://www.postlandfill.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Plastic-Free-Manual-12.2.15.pdf>

### Straw Reduction Campaigns

Be Straw Free, Eco-Cycle

<https://www.ecocycle.org/bestrawfree#touch>

Straw Free

<https://strawfree.org/>

The Last Plastic Straw

<http://thelastplasticstraw.org/>

Strawless Ocean, Lonely Whale Foundation

<https://www.lonelywhale.org/strawlessocean>

Plastic Free Seas

<http://plasticfreeseas.org/campaigns.html>

Straw Wars

<http://strawwars.org/>

Straws Upon Request, There is No Away

<http://thereisnoaway.net/strawsuponrequest/>

One Less Straw, One More Generation

<https://onelessstraw.org/>

Skip the Straw, Blue Ocean Society

<http://www.blueoceansociety.org/how-to-helpdonate/skip-the-straw-project/>

### Other Plastic or Waste Reduction Programs

takeout without

<http://takeoutwithout.org/>

Cafeteria Culture

<http://www.cafeteriaculture.org/>

### Alternatives to Single-Use Plastic Water Bottles

Disposable Plastic Water Bottle Ban, National Park Service

[https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/foia/upload/Disposable-Plastic-Water-Bottle-Evaluation-Report\\_5\\_11\\_17.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/foia/upload/Disposable-Plastic-Water-Bottle-Evaluation-Report_5_11_17.pdf)

TapIt

<https://freetapwater.wordpress.com>

REfill REuse REgatta

<https://hosr.org/refill-reuse-regatta/>



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