

# How to prevent or minimize waste levels in the home



BY SINEAD NÍ MHAINÍN,  
ENVIRONMENT SECTION,  
GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL

WE all know that excess waste generation is bad for the environment, but as individuals what can we do to try and reduce the environmental impact of our daily activities? The best option is clearly to try and prevent waste arising where possible.

Preventing waste before it's ever created does have a positive impact - if you don't create waste then you reduce on the consumption of valuable resources such as water and oil.

Most of us create waste unnecessarily - based on information available from the EPA we discard approximately 30% of the food we buy - at least a portion of every two letters purchased

in the home is disposed of and other common food items disposed of regularly include pasta, rice, bread, fruit and vegetables.

Every kilo of food waste disposed of has a monetary value of approximately €2.

Waste prevention can be defined as any action that limits environmental damage. Preventing waste at source is the best option because if you don't create waste, then you don't need to dispose of it. Simply, it's stopping waste before it starts.

Preventing waste can be difficult - it means looking at the way we live our lives and every choice we make - but with a little thought and some small changes we can all make a positive difference. Our environment is depending on us.

We each use items in the home that could be substituted with reusable options, for example using airtight containers instead of wrapping foodstuffs or lunches in tin foil or using reusable cloths instead of using disposable wipes.

So what can we do to help protect our environment?  
● Think before you print and if necessary make sure to print on both sides of the

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- Don't pick up free newspapers that you won't read
- Use reusable containers
- Be creative with leftovers
- Buy quality products that can be upgraded to extend their useful life

We throw out approximately 30% of the food we buy. All that extra food has to be brought home from the shops, cooked, refrigerated and plated. Food related activities such as refrigeration, cooking and cleaning accounts for approximately half of household energy use.

Top tips when shopping include:

- Plan to buy what you need and beware of special offers that go unused
- Freeze food to prolong its life
- Buy loose fruit and vegetables
- Be aware of packaging - remember you'll have to pay to get rid of it
- Watch your air miles - buy local food as much as possible
- Plan your menus to use in-season local produce
- Remember your reusable shopping bag

And the shocking reality is that on average we throw out 30% of the food we buy!

**Why Prevent Waste**

- Less waste going to landfill means fewer trucks on the road, fewer landfills and less energy used
- Less waste means we can conserve valuable resources like trees, oil, metals, water, and energy
- If we use less, it should cost us less

Remember - it pays to think waste prevention. So think about how you can reduce your impact on the environment, use your nearest bin bank and recycling centre regularly, prevent as much waste or then recycle as much of it as possible - and don't burn waste.

If you don't do it already, get composting - up to 35% of household and most garden waste can be composted - it can only save you money! The bottom line is that prevention means checking that you really need everything you use - and then using less if you can!

Further information on waste prevention and waste management is available from Sinead Ní Mhainín / Mark Molloy, Environment Section, Galway County Council (01-476402 or [smhainin@galwaycoco.ie](mailto:smhainin@galwaycoco.ie))