

# bag it

## **Screening Tool Kit**

Step-by-step instructions and resources  
for screening *Bag It* in your town



## About the Film

**AMERICANS USE 60,000 PLASTIC BAGS EVERY FIVE MINUTES**—single-use disposable bags that we mindlessly throw away. But where is “away?” Where do the bags and other plastics end up, and at what cost to our environment, marine life and human health?

Bag It follows “everyman” Jeb Berrier as he navigates our plastic world. Jeb is not a radical environmentalist, but an average American who decides to take a closer look at our cultural love affair with plastics. Jeb’s journey in this documentary film starts with simple questions: Are plastic bags really necessary? What are plastic bags made from? What happens to plastic bags after they are discarded?

Jeb looks beyond plastic bags and discovers that virtually everything in modern society—from baby bottles, to sports equipment, to dental sealants, to personal care products—is made with plastic or contains potentially harmful chemical additives used in the plastic-making process. When Jeb’s journey takes a personal twist, we see how our crazy-for-plastic world has finally caught up with us and what we can do about it. Today. Right now.

# Step 1: The Event

## Tips for hosting your *Bag It* screening

### Preparing for Your Screening

Once you've nailed down your screening's date, time, and venue and secured *Bag It's* public performance rights, it's time to start preparing for your event! Use this checklist to get started:

- Invite guests via email, Evite, listserv, facebook, phone or text.
- Spread the word to the wider community by creating a Facebook event, sending updates via your Twitter feed, and including links to the *Bag It* website on your own site or blog.
- Use *Bag It's* Press Materials at [bagitmovie.com/press\\_kit.html](http://bagitmovie.com/press_kit.html) to create your own customized event flyer.
- Issue a press release to let your local newspaper and radio stations know about your event.
- At least one week before your event, test-run your DVD. You'll want to be sure that your projector, audio, and DVD player cables fit, that your sound is audible (even in the back of the room), and that the picture that gets projected on your screen or wall is the right shape and size. Make sure your venue space gets very dark, too, and that the screen can be seen from all chairs in the room.
- The better the food, the better the party! Consider locally made snacks that aren't packaged in plastic containers, or ask guests to join a pre-screening potluck.
- Avoid single-use disposable products at your event. Invite audience members to bring their own cups!
- Create a list of immediate local actions your audience can participate in after your screening. For ideas, flip to the list at the end of this toolkit, or visit [bagitmovie.com/get\\_involved.html](http://bagitmovie.com/get_involved.html).



### On the Day of Your Event

- Introduce the film and tell your audience why you were inspired to host *Bag It*.
- After the film ends, allow 30 minutes for discussion. Use the sample discussion questions listed below to engage your guests!
- Encourage your guests to act on what they've learned.
- Send your guests home with simple ideas for taking action and changing habits in their own lives! You may want to begin with some of our suggestions at the end of this tool kit.

## Step 2: Beyond the Screening

Fun ideas for spicing up your event

### Invite an Expert

Arrange to have a guest speaker attend your event. This could be someone who teaches environmental science or marine biology, a local activist who has initiated anti-plastic programs in your community, or a member of an organization that addresses one of the issues discussed in *Bag It* (waste & recycling, marine debris, single-use disposables, or human health). If you're able to invite more than one speaker, you can make it a panel discussion!

### Recycling Challenge

First, look up your city's recycling laws so you know which plastics can and cannot be recycled. Then set up two bins, one for trash and one for recycling. Ask guests to bring a couple of different kinds of disposable plastic containers from home (or use ones you have laying around the house) and lay them out on a table. Then challenge your guests to see if they know which items can get recycled and which cannot. Winners get the best seats in the house, and everyone else gets a pocket-sized reminder of your municipality's recycling rules to take home!

### A Plastic-Free Cooking Class

Many of the things we buy in plastic containers can actually be made at home pretty easily! Guide your guests in making their own hummus or yogurt so they can learn a fun and easy way to reduce their consumption of plastic containers (and have delicious snacks for movie watching).

### Decorate Your Reusable

Ask your guests to bring a plain canvas tote bag, coffee mug or reusable water bottle and channel their inner artist. Provide them with paint pens, puffy paints, and stencils from your local art supply store so they can create fantastic, non-plastic bottles and bags.

## Step 3: Greening Your Screening

8 ways to lower your event footprint

1. Do everything in your power to NOT use single-use disposables at your event. We understand this can be very difficult at larger events. Please encourage guests to bring their own cups, plates, and utensils in all of your pre-event marketing. If this isn't an option and you absolutely must provide disposables, make sure they are compostable—and that you actually compost them after the event.
2. If you're hosting your event in a theater, ask the manager to offer fountain drinks and popcorn at a reduced rate for attendees who bring their own cups or bowls.
3. Go paperless! Use online social networks to invite your guests, and avoid unnecessary printing by sharing take-action or letter-writing materials electronically.
4. Screen with a projector instead of a TV; projectors with LED lights use much less energy than a conventional TV.
5. Turn the lights out completely during your screening.
6. Suggest that people walk, bike, carpool, or take public transportation to the screening. Start a carpool sign-up thread on your Facebook event page or blog.
7. If you plan on providing food at your event, try to buy ingredients from a local co-op or farm, or buy food with minimal plastic packaging. Invite your guests to do the same.
8. Make sure there is a recycling bin in plain view for people who do bring cans and bottles.

## Step 4: After the Screening

### What can I do to reduce plastic pollution?

After *Bag It* ends, your guests will probably want to know: What can I do to reduce plastic pollution? Here are a few ideas to share with your audiences so they can get involved immediately after the credits roll.

#### **ACTION 1: Letter Writing Works!**

Consider the actions that are most important to your community. Removing plastic chemicals from children's toys? Initiating a bag ban in your city? Asking local representatives to vote for local waste reduction or recycling measures?

Focus on one or two specific actions and develop a sample letter your audience can send to friends, local officials, or local business owners. For help, visit [bagitmovie.com/get\\_involved.html](http://bagitmovie.com/get_involved.html) for our sample letter ideas!

At your screening, offer sample letters and a list of recipients, addresses, and phone numbers for guests to pick up on their way in or out. If you're hosting a smaller event, use the post-film discussion period to ask each guest to write a personal letter to a local retailer or official right then and there!

#### **ACTION 2: Participate in a Weeklong Plastic Detox**

Challenge your guests to commit to going plastic-free for one week, starting on the day of the screening. This means ditching plastic bags, plastic beverage bottles, disposable plastic packaging and to-go coffee cups (to name a few), and replacing them with reusable bottles, bags, and containers.

Ask guests to use a sign-in sheet to commit themselves to the detox, and then follow up with all of the participants by sending them emails with tips for plastic alternatives and words of encouragement. At the end of the week, you can host another get-together to celebrate your successful detox and talk about what changes you can permanently incorporate into your life.

Ask guests to use Facebook to let others know about the ease or challenge of this project throughout the week. This will get others talking!

#### **ACTION 3: Organize a Waterway Cleanup**

Billions of plastic bags and bottles end up in our waterways each year. After the screening, invite your guests to join you in cleaning up a local body of water; this is a great way to reduce plastic pollution and bring your community together to take action.

It's a good idea to select the date and location of the cleanup before the screening so you can give your guests all of the information they need to get involved. This guide ([watershedactivities.com/projects/spring/scleanup.html](http://watershedactivities.com/projects/spring/scleanup.html)) will tell you everything you need to know about the cleanup process.

#### **ACTION 4: Become a Bag It Town.**

Start changing the habits of every consumer in your town by passing legislation to make your community plastic bag free and becoming a Bag It Town!

The transition from plastic to reusable bags can be hard at first, and you may find neighbors, friends, and retailers reluctant to change. But it's *Bag It's* goal to help at least 25 towns across the country pass legislation to ban plastic bags.

To get started, contact the *Bag It* team at [bagittown@gmail.com](mailto:bagittown@gmail.com) to learn how to begin drastically reducing your town's disposable bag consumption right away. We can be your support system as you initiate a bag ban, assisting with everything from formulating an action plan to supplying sample bag-ban ordinances.

And for immediate resources and ideas, visit [bagitmovie.com/bagittown.html](http://bagitmovie.com/bagittown.html) to download our Bag Ban Tool Kit.

## Discussion

1. Did anything you learned in *Bag It* surprise you?
2. Much of Jeb's journey was about changing his own lifestyle and relationship to consumption. How much personal obligation do we each have to reduce our individual consumption of plastic?
3. Biologists studying BPA and phthalates (additives commonly used in plastic) are in agreement over the harmful effects of both chemicals. Why do you think our government has not taken significant action to address this problem?
4. Many groups in the US are currently advocating for bag bans or fees in their cities, but they face significant opposition. Why do you think individuals, businesses and/or government officials might be reluctant to support bag-banning legislation?
5. Do you think a bag ban and/or fee would be effective in your community? What major challenges would you have to overcome to see this happen?
6. As you saw in *Bag It*, there are many ways to reduce your consumption of plastic. Which of these ways do you think will be easiest to adopt into your lifestyle? Which will be the most challenging?

## Resources

The *Bag It* team has come across countless amazing organizations in our quest to understand as much as we can about plastic. Look through these organizations and resources to learn about existing research and campaigns.

- **The Environmental Working Group** documents research about environmental and industrial toxins that build up in our bodies.
- **Earth 911** offers a database of recycling facilities nationwide, searchable by zip code.
- **The Skin Deep Database** provides safety ratings for nearly a quarter of all products on the market—over 55,000 products with over 9,000 ingredients.
- **Chemical Body Burden** presents facts and figures about 700 chemical contaminants found in the human body.
- **Scientific American** provides information about Bisphenol A (BPA), the key component used to make epoxy resin and polycarbonate plastic, which are used to make many consumer goods.



# Take Action



1. **Become a Bag It Town:** You can help lead the movement in your neighborhood! Bag It Towns reduce the collective consumption of plastic bags via ordinances that implement a ban of and/or a fee on single-use disposables. Email [bagittown@gmail.com](mailto:bagittown@gmail.com) to get started or begin by downloading the Bag Ban Tool Kit on the *Bag It* [website](#).
2. **Carry reusable shopping bags:** Whether you're shopping for groceries, clothes or electronics, be sure to bring along the reusable bag(s) of your choice. Keep them in your car so you don't forget to use them. Some companies like ChicoBag make bags small enough to fit in your pocket or purse!
3. **Give up bottled water:** By drinking your water from a glass jar or a reusable bottle, you can help reduce the environmental costs associated with producing bottled water and save money while you're at it. Unlike bottle water, the quality of your tap water is regularly monitored by your city.
4. **Say no to plastic bags:** Bagging your produce is often unnecessary. If you do want a separate bag for produce, cloth options are available. You can make your own from old t-shirts! Produce bags can also be purchased at [ecobags.com](http://ecobags.com), and a multitude of other websites.
5. **Buy from bulk bins:** You can find almost all dry foods, as well as some personal care products, from bulk bins. If you can't find bulk bins in your neighborhood, try to buy non-perishable goods in large packages, which will decrease the amount of plastic used.
6. **Make your own seltzer:** When it comes to carbonated drinks, avoid high fructose corn syrup AND disposable bottles by making your own seltzer with a Soda Stream soda maker. We recommend adding a bit of juice to your homemade soda to create a delicious bubbly drink. Kids love it!
7. **Pack food in reusable containers:** Bring reusable containers to restaurants, delis, and butcher counters to package your take-away food without disposable waste! Find new, fun containers from [LunchBots](#) or [Life Without Plastic](#). Antique stores are also great sources of old glass Pyrex containers.
8. **Choose milk in returnable glass bottles:** Many local dairies provide milk in returnable glass bottles rather than plastic or plastic-coated cardboard. (That's plastic inside your carton, not wax!) Visit [Eat Wild](#) to find local dairies that sell milk in reusable bottles.
9. **Use bar soap and shampoo:** Make the change from liquid to bar! [Lush](#), [Chagrin Valley](#), [Burt's Bees](#), and [J.R. Liggett's](#) offer great soap and shampoo bars.
10. **Join an organization or create one!:** Join a local group of motivated citizens or students to make change happen locally! Look for local or campus chapters of [The Surfrider Foundation](#), the [Sierra Club](#), or [Oceana](#) to meet like-minded people working toward a more plastic-free world!

## Organizations

Here are just some of the many organizations working to counter the threat of plastics.

- **The Surfrider Foundation** is a non-profit grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world's oceans, waves, and beaches.
- **The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** (NOAA) is a federal agency focused on the condition of the oceans and the atmosphere.
- **Oceana** is the largest international organization focused solely on ocean conservation.
- **TEDX** is a non-profit organization dedicated to compiling and disseminating scientific evidence on the health and environmental problems caused by low dose exposure to chemicals that interfere with development and function.
- **Plastic Pollution Coalition** is a global alliance of individuals, organizations and businesses working together to stop plastic pollution and its toxic impacts on humans, animals and the environment. With its work, Plastic Pollution seeks to put plastic pollution at the forefront of global social, environmental and political discourse and affect the measurable reduction of the global plastic footprint.