

No Plastic Bag Days - No disposable utensil days.

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Wellcome and *ParkNShop* have one day a month when they don't issue plastic bags. *City Super* has introduced a checkout aisle solely for shoppers who have brought their own bags. We too can have our own day which, although it doesn't allow us to acquire and use disposable utensils, does allow us to prevent unnecessary waste. Fear not, there is silverware (not to be mistaken for silver spoons, knives and forks that might be worth more than you think). This means that even if we don't have disposable utensils like plastics knives and forks, we'll still be able to eat our food. Honestly, does a plastic knife actually help us? It seems to break before we even actually manage to cut something. That may just be the reason why metallic utensils were invented. Why are we still living in the past?

city'super



惠康 wellcome

If you're thinking, "When I buy food at school, I want to eat it elsewhere", let us ask you; where else are you going to eat it? This shouldn't be an issue since students aren't allowed food above the ground floor. If you're on the ground floor and saying you're not bothered to go to the cafeteria (which is on the ground floor), then you have got to change your ways. Not only are you lazy, you are a very big cause for concern in our society.

According to the Hong Kong EPD (Environmental Protection Department), over the past years, the government has been making some efforts to reduce the use of plastic bags. This however seems not to be happening. Why? It looks as if the government has given in to pressure from big companies about plastic bag usage. The government needs their money and so does what it needs to, to obtain it. Efforts to reduce plastic bad usage appear to be based solely on the people of the society. In this case, that would be us. With us being the consumer, and companies earning money off of us, it's not just up to us to 'help' this change. It's up to us to make the change. In 2003,



372,000 tons of plastic bags were disposed of at landfills. This fell to 368,158 tons in 2004 and 362,080 tons in 2005.

Based on the current average disposal cost of 125 HK dollars a ton for waste disposal at landfills, the costs of disposing of plastic-bag waste were 46.5 million dollars in 2003, 46 million HK dollars in 2004 and 45.2 million HK dollars in 2005.

These figures come from the website:

http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/waste/waste_maincontent.html

Although the numbers are decreasing, we can still say that they are high...in the tens of millions. Our school can contribute to making this figure lower, so why don't we? It doesn't even have to be every day of the school week. If your life relies on the plastic knives and forks since you think that the cafeterias silverware is dirty, then why don't you bring your own? People in our school manage to bring their own lunch, so it shouldn't be too much trouble to bring a knife and fork from home. We're sure it won't fill your bag up or make it 10 times heavier, so what's there to worry about?

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/01/09/asia/plastic.php>

In the article above, you can read about how China (the country we live in) is soon to be banning shops from giving out free plastic bags. This shows us how worrying and destructive our current plastic bag usage is. Their REALISTIC suggestion is that people use baskets and cloth sacks instead to reduce damage to the environment.

"White pollution," also known as plastic bags, have filled up landfills so much that they even have their own nickname! The problem seems to have surfaced when shopkeepers started handing out cheap, flimsy plastic bags to customers

"Our country consumes a huge amount of plastic shopping bags each year," said the State Council, China's cabinet.

Even though you might think plastic bags are oh so very useful, they cause a serious waste of energy and resources and create a lot of environmental pollution because of excessive usage, inadequate recycling and other reasons. Do you always yes to a shopkeeper whenever they ask you for a plastic bag? If so, maybe next time you should think what you're contributing to? Just so you know. You're not contributing to a good cause.



Although China has the fastest growing economy of the world, this comes at a price. Factories produce lots of low-cost products for the world's consumers. This is to maximize profits, but in turn has severely damaged the country's air and water. ***Sooner or later, all supermarkets, department stores and shops will be prohibited from giving out free plastic bags***, the State Council has said. Last year, San Francisco became the first U.S. city to ban petroleum-based plastic grocery bags. Who knows when we'll be next?

Facts about bag fads

- Approximately 380 billion plastic bags, sacks and wraps are used each year.
- Before plastic bags became popular to shopkeepers in the 1970's, brown paper bags were the main choice.
- Each year, Americans use about **10 billion** paper bags, the equivalent of 14 million trees being cut down. (China Trade News estimates that we use plastic bags at a rate of 3 billion bags every day. Three billion. If that estimate is right, that means China uses more bags in one month than the U.S. uses in a year)
- Though recyclable, only 10 to 15 percent of paper bags are being recycled. (Why is this?)

Running out of landfill space...reasons why and how to improve it (recycling)

I'm sure you know this already, but we are running out of land. We don't mean the type of land we use to work or play on; we mean the type of land we have to waste, to dump our rubbish onto. A landfill.

Waste is a common problem of well-off people. This is especially the case when people can afford greater convenience and more purchases. People tend to throw away more rubbish and not re use things. Our school is no exception to this. The continued growth in waste loads means Hong Kong is running out of landfill space far earlier than expected, and the existing landfills will be filled up, one by one, in early to mid 2010s(next year!) if the amount of waste continues to increase at the current rate.

Unless we figure out what to do with all our waste, or don't start acting now, we could face a crisis in the next decade of having nowhere to put the thousands of tonnes of waste we thrown away each day.

These are the two preferred sites for new landfills

Pillar Point Valley North (PPVN) Landfill - a land based site

- South Cheung Chau (5CQ Landfill - a landfill developed on an artificial island constructed over the existing South Cheung Chau Disposal Ground for unconsummated mud (near Soko islands)

"Do you live near these places? Do the land fills affect you? Smell? Visual pollution?"

http://209.85.175.132/search?q=cache:OXEUJxmBsDEJ:www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environment/hk/waste/prob_solutions/files/Executive_Summary.pdf+new+landfill+sites+hk&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=2&client=firefox-a

Waste Reduction



This photo of one of the three landfills in Hong Kong was taken by Mr. Powers last year before he left STC. Can you see the roads and trucks actually on top of the solid waste we produce?

Waste reduction is often associated with recycling, but it is more complicated than that. Avoiding the generation of waste in the first place and minimising waste are also important in any waste reduction

strategy. In others words, we should firstly try to REDUCE the amount of waste we produce, REUSE items wherever possible and finally when an object is no longer useful, RECYCLE it.

What you can do?

Individuals can make RESPONSIBLE choices to reduce their waste by buying items with less packaging, using reusable bags for shopping, and separating waste paper, metals and plastics from our daily waste for recycling.

Additionally, the EPD launched a territory-wide Programme on Source Separation of Domestic Waste in January 2005 which encourages housing estates/buildings to set up waste separation facilities on building floors and broaden the types of recyclables to be recovered, so as to increase domestic waste recovery and reduce waste requiring disposal. Is there one at your home? If so and you haven't started already, it's never too late to start!

You can also join Earth Hour,
on Saturday 28th of March. All
you need to do is switch off
your lights from
8.30pm to 9.30pm!

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<http://www.earthhour.org/hongkong>