

What is the Reduce Single Use team?

- An environmentally-minded initiative that was started at Eckerd College by our two professors, Dr. Amy Siuda and Dr. Shannon Gowans, in 2018 alongside student interns. You can visit our website [here](#)!
- The project aims to reduce overall consumption of single-use plastics to prevent trash in our waters and create more sustainable lifestyles on campus and throughout local communities.

What is Remora?

- Launched in April 2023, Remora is a free mobile app that aims to reduce plastic pollution by allowing users to track their uses and refusals of single-use plastics.
 - *ex: a refusal would be filling a reusable water bottle whereas a use would be using a disposable plastic water bottle.*
- Remora has two primary outcomes:
 - The app helps individuals to be more conscious of their plastic use and encourages more plastic refusals by holding users accountable. Gamification through leaderboards & badges facilitates user engagement.
 - In the background, the app builds an anonymized database of uses and refusals, including business locations (if entered). This information can lead to changes in policy and business practices that will prevent unnecessary plastic waste generation and keep plastic pollution off of our beaches and out of our environment.
- Remora was developed with US Environmental Protection Agency - Trash Free Waters grant funding by the Reduce Single-Use project at Eckerd College.

The logo for Remora is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The word "REMORA" is in all caps, with the "O" being a circle. A small, stylized blue fish icon is positioned below the "O", facing right. The fish has a simple body with a small fin on its back and a tail.

Why Run a Challenge?

- Plastic makes up the majority of marine debris. Once in the environment, plastic does not break down and is virtually impossible to remove all of it. The best way to reduce plastic pollution is to prevent the generation of plastic waste.
 - As consumers, we can choose to refuse and avoid unnecessary single-use plastic. Remora challenges help motivate users to reduce plastic use.
- Challenges can be run through the app to track single-use-plastic consumption, engage users, and track progress towards refusing plastics.
- Challenges gather data to understand single-use plastic consumption in your community. These data can be used to identify areas where plastics are difficult to refuse, which could be used to inform local policy changes.
 - This can make getting involved fun for community members!
- Challenges engage people by bringing them together over a shared goal.
 - Participants can get rewarded for their achievements, which encourages them to continue tracking their uses and refusals.



How do Challenges Work?

1. Download the [Remora](#) app.
2. Join the community by setting up an account. Please have one troop leader setup an account and the other troop members can report back to the troop leader of what they have done for them to enter it into the app.
3. Join the **Girl Scouts of Manitou Council** Challenge before **March 17** by using this code **456789**. The challenge will run until April 22nd. You can join the challenge at any time but the sooner you join after the start date the better. There will be weekly prizes for the top troop of the leader board and most items logged. Then at the end of the challenge, the top troop will receive two free overnights in one of our camp buildings.
4. Watch the [tutorial](#) on how to make a post and get into the habit of recording your daily refusals and uses. You can view the tutorial without an Instagram account.
5. Once the Challenge begins, monitor your progress on the Challenge Leaderboard. You will earn points for both refusals and uses. All data (not just refusals) are important for informing changes to policy and business practices.



Remora FAQs:

- Why use Remora?
 - The Remora app offers a unique and engaging way for you to live sustainably by logging your uses and refusals of single-use plastic items! Remora helps users track their uses and refusals of plastics to understand their daily single-use plastic consumption. While doing this, users can see records of their progress as they advance in their plastic-free journey, compete with friends to see who can be the most plastic free, and contribute information about what plastics are being used and refused to help inform policy change, strengthen outreach efforts, and much more!
- What kind of data do you collect?
 - All data collection is entirely anonymous. A unique id is created for each user, which is different from the user name that shows up in the app. We collect the total uses and refusals for each category of plastic, as well as the location of the entry, if added to a post. We also collect demographic information (user's country, postal code, date of birth, race/ethnicity, gender, and level of education) that is used for research purposes and to explore if the data is representative of the broader community. *No data is collected for users under 18 years old.*
- How do I make a post on Remora?
 - Click the blue "+" button at the bottom center of the homepage. Toggle the "I refused" and "I used" buttons at the top - the option you've selected will be blue. Next, select which items you used or refused. You can scroll through the list, select different categories, or use the search bar to find something specific. Once you've selected all items, scroll to the top to change the number of items used by clicking the "+" or "-" buttons on each item. Then click "Next". Add an *optional* caption and location. Press "Share" at the top of the page to change who sees this post to "Public", "Friends Only," or "Private." Press "Share" to post your use or refusal!



- How do I tag a location on my post? (and why should I)
 - After you've chosen which items you refused or used and press "**Next**," the app prompts you to add a caption. Below this, you can click "**Add location**" and type in the business or city you're in. Adding a location helps us identify locations and business-types with high amounts of plastic uses or refusals. We can use this information to find ways to reduce the amount of plastic being used in these locations and businesses.
 - If no specific location is added, then only the zip code of the location of the phone will be recorded.
- How do I set up or change daily notifications?
 - When you first download the app and set up your account, you will be prompted to select a time for your daily notification. If you chose to set these up later or want to change your daily notification time, follow these instructions:
 - On the home page, click on the three horizontal bars on the top left corner of the screen. Click on "**Settings**," "**Daily Reminder**," then the downward arrow, adjust the toggle to your desired time for your daily notification, click "**Done**," then "**Save**," and your new daily notification is set to go!



Uses and Refusals for Each Category:

Beverage

- Water bottles: This is designed to count a usage or refusal for every 16oz water bottle. For larger bottles, you can track several uses or refusals to get a more accurate data entry.
- Cup: Similar to the water bottle, count one per every 16oz (solo cup size or a medium sized coffee). This also includes cups made out of styrofoam, and even cups that are made out of paper but are leak proof.
 - Leak proof cups often have a thin layer of plastic on the inside which prevents the liquid from leaking through - but this plastic prevents the cup from being able to be recycled or composted.
- Straw: Usages include straws labeled as bioplastic, biodegradable, and bio-based. These products are still plastic and will act like plastic when they go to the landfill or into the natural environment.
 - As straws are being banned in cities and states, we need to be aware of bioplastic or compostable plastic straws, which can only be processed in an industrial composting facility. Straws completely made without plastics, such as paper or pasta, would count as a refusal. Preemptively refusing a straw when ordering would count as a refusal.
- Lid: Any clear lid for iced or cold drink that has a lid on it is going to count for this section. Hot lids are going to be placed under the coffee lid section.
- Tea Bag: A lot of big name brands use mesh bags made out of plastic for tea. When this mesh bag is placed into hot water it releases several microplastics right into your drink!
 - Be weary of tea bags and ensure that the brand you are buying from are not made of plastic. Consider using loose tea and a tea ball.
- K-Cup: These are made of plastic, but you can now buy pods that are compatible with instant coffee machines that are reusable.



- Stirrer: Wooden and plastic are the common forms of stirrers. Wooden stirrers would be logged as a refusal and plastic stirrers would be logged as a use. Try using a spoon or avoiding them altogether and log it as a refusal.
- Juice Bottle: This assumes a juice bottle, or a bottle which does not fit in any other category. Juice bottles often come in different sizes.
- Creamer: This assumes any small cup with a thin film on it - including to-go creamers, jams, and syrup.

Food Packaging

- Snack wrapper: This applies to any thin foil plastic that is holding a snack: chip bags, granola bars, fruit snacks, etc. These all are going to fit under this category unless it is something like applesauce pouches, which would go under the squeeze pouch or snack cup category. Consider fruit for a plastic-free alternative.
- Takeout container: Styrofoam or plastic containers from restaurants. Be prepared and bring your own for a refusal.
- Squeeze pouch: This would count for larger packets such as, but not limited to, juice pouches and apple sauce. These are pretty flexible and are frequently capable of being deflated and reinflated.
 - You can avoid these by purchasing a larger quantity container and using reusable containers for single servings.
- Condiment packet: This would count for smaller packets such as, but not limited to, ketchup and mustard.
 - If you are using a large ketchup container that has several servings or uses that would count as a refusal for a condiment packet compared to the small single serve packets that are often found at fast food restaurants.
- Snack cup: Some examples would be pudding or yogurt cups, which are sturdier than the plastic squeeze pouches.
- Prepared food container: These would be clamshell containers (containers that are bound together in the middle) or similar, that you can buy at grocery stores, coffee shops, or gas stations.



- To avoid them, you could use your own container to hold pre-prepared food or purchase prepared food in paper-based containers.

Utensils and Flatware

- Plate: This includes styrofoam plates, leak-proof paper plates, and disposable plates that may be listed as biodegradable or compostable plastic.
 - Leak-proof paper plates, while mostly made out of paper, have a thin layer of plastic on top which prevents liquids from leaking through. This plastic is not capable of being recycled and does not break down like paper does.
- Plastic utensil packet: The plastic wrapping and the utensils are often bound in.
- Spoon: This could be a firm plastic, but also could be a spoon labeled as bioplastic or compostable plastic.
- Bowl: This includes styrofoam bowls, leak-proof paper bowls, and disposable bowls that may be listed as biodegradable or compostable plastic.
 - Leak-proof paper bowls, while mostly made out of paper, have a thin layer of plastic on top which prevents liquids from leaking through. This plastic is not capable of being recycled and does not break down like paper does.
- Knife: This could be a firm plastic, but also could be a knife labeled as bioplastic or compostable plastic.
- Fork: This could be a firm plastic, but also could be a fork labeled as bioplastic or compostable plastic.

Bags

- Grocery Bag: These are offered at food or grocery stores. An alternative would be a cloth bag, paper bag, or if you are reusing a plastic bag you already had.
- Resealable bag: Any bag that you would usually place food into like snack bags or gallon bags. There are several alternatives to this: beeswax wraps, reusable snack bags, and reusable containers.



- Shopping bag: These are offered at retail areas, and are frequently larger than grocery bags. An alternative would be a cloth bag or if you are reusing a plastic bag you already had.
- Trash Bag: These are larger, often sturdier, bags as compared to grocery or shopping bags. There is no perfect replacement for these bags but paper bags or fabric bins may be useful for some situations.
 - In addition, reducing the amount of waste through reusing and composting can assist in reducing the amount of trash bags needed.
- Pet waste bag: These are produced specifically for cleaning up pet waste. A great way to reduce the amount of usage of these at home is by using a poop-scooper.
- Produce bag: These are the typically clear plastic bags that are at grocery stores or food markets for your produce and other food items.
 - An alternative to this would be a reusable mesh bag or a cotton tote bag.

Home

- Dryer Sheet: Dryer sheets are often made out of polyester which is plastic. When used, plastic fibers are often shed and may get on your clothes, within the machine, or in the environment.
 - An alternative could be opting for dryer balls, which still dampens the static and make your clothes nice and soft.
- Laundry + dishwasher pod: These are the pods that you throw in as a replacement to liquid detergent. However, there is a thin film of plastic which keeps the liquid in the pod - this degrades in the heat leaving small particles of plastic all over the cleaned products.
 - Alternatives could be liquid detergent or dishwasher powder.
- Plastic wrap: This could be the flimsy yet sticky plastic often used as a covering on food materials, as well as parchment paper which is used frequently in cooking and baking.

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- This can be replaced with beeswax wrap or reusable containers.
Parchment paper has a layer of silicone on it and can be replaced with a reusable silicone baking sheet.

Hygiene

- Disposable wipes: These are wipes that can be used on bodies, counter tops, and even floors. There are many cloth alternatives that could replace these plastic products!
- Cotton bud: While the cotton itself is not made out of plastic, it is often wrapped around a small plastic stick. There are reusable products that can be used instead.
- Menstrual product: These products are completely necessary, so don't feel bad for using them! But there are also many alternatives that you can look into.
- Diaper: These products are completely necessary, so don't feel bad for using them! But there are also many alternatives that you can look into.

Safety

- Gloves: These are unavoidable at times and we understand that. Safety is always most important but if you are gardening, or working on an outside project try cloth or rubber gloves to still protect your hands.
- Mask: During the pandemic, this was a necessity and still are today. There are reusable cloth ones that have been made but make the best choice for you and the situation you are in.
 - One suggestion is if you are using a disposable mask, break the ear elastics so if it does end up in the environment, wildlife does not end up getting stuck in them as easily.

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Scoring for Challenges FAQs:

- What counts as a refusal?
 - Using a reusable item in place of a single-use plastic item is a refusal. For example, you can ask to use your own cup at a coffee shop, tell your waiter you don't want a straw, or use an alternative product (such as wool dryer balls) and enter a refusal each time you use it. Using recyclable plastic does NOT count as a refusal; it's still single-use plastic.
- How is the leaderboard calculated?
 - Entering both uses and refusals helps you move up on the leaderboard, but refusals do have more value and help you climb the leaderboard faster! The overall leaderboard is reset every week on Sunday night so everyone has a chance to reach the top. Challenge specific leaderboards are calculated over the duration of the challenge.
- How do I earn badges? (and know what they are for)
 - You can earn badges by completing certain tasks. To find out what accomplishments you need to achieve to earn each badge click on “**My Profile**” in the bottom right-hand corner of the screen, and click on “**Badges**” This will show you all of the badges you have already earned (in full color) and the badges you are working towards (in grayscale). You can click on each badge and it will pull up its name and what you need to do to earn it.



Plastic Factoids:

- Over 2500 garbage trucks worth of plastic enter the ocean every day. How could you reduce your plastic consumption? ([source](#))
- 171 plastic bottles per minute are purchased in the City of St. Petersburg. Could you carry a reusable water bottle? ([source](#))
- Over 1 million marine animals die each year from plastic pollution. The solution: reduce ([source](#)).
- Due to its lightweight nature, styrofoam, or expanded polystyrene, breaks down rapidly into microplastics, and can spread quickly. It lingers in soil and waterways, leaking hazardous chemicals, which can cause serious health problems ([source](#)).
- Only 9% of waste in the US has been recycled. This is less than both Europe and China, which are recycling 30% and 25% of waste, respectively. Many materials such as styrofoam and paper cups coated with a plastic liner are not easily recyclable ([source](#)).
- At least 14 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean every year, and plastic makes up 80% of all marine debris found from surface waters to deep-sea sediments ([source](#)).



Plastic FAQs:

- Why should I care about reducing my individual plastic use?
 - One person reducing all of their plastic will not change the world, but if everybody partially reduces their plastic consumption, that can make a huge difference! Reducing your plastic use is also about creating awareness; we use way more plastic than we realize, or that's even necessary. By trying to reduce your consumption, you'll begin to see how much plastic we waste every single day.
- Can I just recycle all of my plastic waste?
 - Most recycling centers only take a few types of plastic, and even then, you must properly clean and sort your recycling to prevent it from going to a landfill. Less than 10% of all plastic actually gets recycled, and the rest gets incinerated, goes to the landfill, or worse, our environment.
- Are compostable or bioplastics a good alternative?
 - In short, it's complicated. Bio-plastics are good alternatives to plastics on one hand because their production results in less greenhouse gas emissions. However, compostable plastics and bioplastics often require specific disposal machines and facilities, such as an industrial composter, to break them down completely which the average person does not have access to. Without the proper disposal methods, these items can easily become another form of pollution in the environment. Therefore, using reusable items in replace of any single-use item (plastic or not) is the most sustainable practice.
- What are the best alternatives to single-use plastics?
 - Reusable items! No single-use material is sustainable since they require new materials and energy to be produced and end up going to a recycling facility, landfill, or the environment. Bringing your own reusable cutlery, water bottles, takeout containers, coffee cups, and more is the most sustainable option.

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- What else can I do to help?
 - Education is the first step, take the time to research small ways you can begin to be more sustainable in your daily life. Making small strides towards a less wasteful lifestyle is still great work towards a better future. Not everyone is going to be willing or able to become completely environmentally friendly, which is okay! The important part is making an effort to be sustainable when you can and being aware of your waste.
 - Join clean-ups and visit or call your local recycling center to learn more about the items they recycle. Look into sustainable businesses in your city such as zero-waste stores, refill stations, second-hand stores, and businesses that don't use single-use plastics. Support local businesses when you can.



Single Use Plastics and Their Reusable Alternatives:

Single Use	Reusables	Single Use	Reusables
Plastic & Paper Cups	Glass Cups or Reusable Cups	Dryer Sheets	Wool Dryer Balls
Plastic Water Bottle	Metal Bottle	Detergent Pods	Liquid Detergent
Disposable Utensils	Reusable or To-Go Cutlery	Disposable Wipes	Fabric Wipes
Plastic Straws	Metal Straws or No Straws	Plastic Gloves	Rubber Gloves
Plastic Shopping Bag	Reusable Bags / Tote Bag	Cotton Swabs	Reusable Swabs
Produce Bag	Cotton or Mesh Produce Bag	Trash Bags	Washable Pail Liners
Plastic Stirrers	Spoons or Bamboo Stirrers	Dishwasher Pods	Dishwasher Tablets

Single Use	Reusables	Single Use	Reusables
Disposable Razor	Metal Razor	Plastic Food Wrap	Beeswax Wrap
Liquid Shampoo	Hair Care Bars	Sandwich Bags	Silicon Bags
Liquid Soap	Bar Soap	Paper Towels	Cloth Towels
Loofah	Sea Sponge	Tea Bags	Loose Leaf Tea
Makeup Wipes	Washable Cotton Pads or Cloth	Drink Cartons	Glass or Aluminum Containers
Menstrual Pads	Period Underwear or Cups	Snack Cups	Multi-Serving Containers
Dishwasher Pods	Dishwasher Tablets	Plastic Utensils	Metal Utensils

Party & Event Planning

Having a party/event with several guests coming can make it hard to have a sustainable event, especially with the convenience of single-use plastics making the cleanup of these events easier. For examples of how to have a sustainable event, you can look at the [zero waste guide](#) that the Reduce Single-Use Team has created.

