

A MONTH WITHOUT PLASTIC...

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[Plastic Free July](#) is a world- wide movement focusing on getting people to reduce their use of single use plastics once a year. I'd been trying to cut down my own plastic consumption for some time, and so in 2019 I signed up to attempt to use no single-use plastic for the whole month!

What I soon realised was that plastic-free living requires serious planning, as I needed to find alternatives for a large percentage of the things that came into the house on a weekly basis. Splitting the shopping into categories was the first step:

Bathroom

Bottles of shampoo, conditioner, tubes of toothpaste, plastic toothbrushes and rolls of loo paper wrapped in plastic all had to go. What I discovered was that solid shampoo and conditioner exist and work well, and that [Lush](#), beloved of teenage girls everywhere, is the place to go for this sort of product. Bamboo toothbrushes are fairly easy to find these days, but toothpaste was more problematic. Eventually (after trying some pretty disgusting toothpaste in a jar) I discovered toothpaste tablets, which taste like toothpaste but are plastic free. And loo roll that was not wrapped in any plastic at all was delivered in a very large box by the aptly named ['Who Gives a Crap'](#).



Household

For cleaning we'd been using products from a company called [Splosh](#) for some time, which provides refills for its cleaning products by post, so there wasn't much change needed there. We replaced the plastic washing up brush and nylon scrubber with natural fibre ones.

Groceries

It soon became clear that I was going to have to look further afield than Tesco to get a choice of plastic-free fruit and vegetables. Plastic-free does exist in the major supermarkets, but the choice is limited, and I discovered that my local farm shop had a much better choice without any of the plastic. We started getting a traditional milk delivery for milk and fruit juice in glass bottles and also signed up for an organic fruit and veg box scheme with [Riverford](#). The local butcher gave up plastic packing a while ago, and several local supermarkets would put fresh fish or cheese in customers own containers, so that wasn't a problem. Cooking ingredients such as rice and pasta and pulses required slightly more effort, but could be got from a zero-waste



shop, of which there are more springing up all the time. What was a real problem though was any sort of ready meal. We usually cook a lot from scratch, but it's nice to have something easy now and again, but it really wasn't possible to buy any sort of pre-prepared meal without plastic.

Out and about

Plastic wrapped sandwiches were completely out so lunches took more preparation. Any trip out had to include the refillable coffee cup, the refillable water bottle and at least one reusable shopping bag. And I got very quick at vetoing plastic straws before they got put in my drinks!

Conclusions

So, at the end of the month had my shopping habits changed permanently? Some had - we still have the milk delivery, the Riverford fruit and veg box, and the big box of loo paper (which all proved very handy when panic buying hit in March). And the bathroom and household substitutes are all still in use. But I have reverted to plastic where there isn't a readily available alternative. And a lot of the substitutes were certainly more expensive, but not all, and some proved much cheaper in the long run as they lasted for much longer.

Above all what focusing on plastic for a month showed me, is just how much plastic there is in the products that we buy, and how much is unnecessary. There is too much for recycling to cope with, we simply have to reduce the amount that is used in the first place

Great website articles related to Plastic Free July:

- The Independent: 'Plastic Free July: Everything you need to smash it, from reusable water bottles to cookbooks' - read [here](#)
- Pebble Magazine: '12 Ways To Still Do Plastic Free July' – read [here](#)

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