

# LAUNCH for Long Beach Toolkit: Trash-Free Lunch

**Free your school from the grip of the single-use waste monster!**

Help your school reduce lunchtime waste by starting a Trash Free Lunch program. Teach and encourage students to reduce waste by packing food and drinks from home in reusable containers instead of single-use plastics along with reusable utensils and cloth napkins. Reducing your lunchtime waste goes a long way in creating a more sustainable school campus.

Within this toolkit, you'll find various downloadable resources. For your convenience, you can access them all in one place by scanning the Toolkit Resources QR code on the last page to view them in a Google Drive folder.

This toolkit was created in partnership with the City of Long Beach Utilities.



Note: This toolkit is great for students who pack a lunch from home. For those who get a school lunch, please refer to the Lunchtime Sorting toolkit.

Want to use this toolkit in español? Scan the QR code to the right!



**Have you registered?**



**Lunchtime Sorting Toolkit:**



**Versión en español:**



## Toolkit Details



GRADES OF green LAUNCH Eco-Toolkit

### Trash Free Lunch

Help your school reduce lunchtime waste by starting a Trash Free Lunch program!

**Skill Level**  
Grades K-5, led by a teacher, parent or school administrator

**Climate Crisis Topic**  
Waste Food

**Project Time**  
Two weeks, up to a full school year

**What You'll Need**  
Printed audit sheets, pencils & clipboards

## Why It's Important

Packaging that we use one time and throw away drains Earth's natural resources and fills up landfills contributing to the planet's mounting plastic pollution problem.

## What You Will Accomplish

Trash Free Lunches make less waste, save natural resources, and cut down on pollution in the air that causes climate change. Families can also save money by buying packaged food in bulk and buying whole fruits and vegetables with no packaging.

## What is Long Beach Doing to Reduce Waste?

The City of Long Beach is committed to reducing waste. On May 4, 2018, Long Beach Mayor Garcia signed into law an Expanded Polystyrene (Styrofoam) ordinance that bans the use of single-use food and beverage containers made of expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam, rigid polystyrene #6, and non-recyclable and non-compostable material for prepared food distribution. Learn more information about the Expanded Polystyrene Ordinance by scanning the QR code below.

### The Expanded Polystyrene Ordinance:



## NGSS

This toolkit address the following Science and Engineering Practices (SEPs) within the Performance Expectations of NGSS for Grades K-2 and 3-5:

- Asking Questions and Defining a Problem
- Planning and Carrying out Investigations
- Analyzing and Interpreting Data
- Using Mathematics and Computational Thinking
- Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information

## Learning Objectives

### Analysis

- Students will analyze packed home lunches to determine whether or not they are Trash Free

### Project Management

- Students will identify routines
- Students will practice leadership skills by delegating tasks to each other

### Evaluation and Assessment

- Students will track and evaluate the impact of their project

# Educator Project Plan

Follow the steps below to set up successful Trash Free Lunches at your school! Need help? Email us at [info@gradesofgreen.org](mailto:info@gradesofgreen.org)!

Track your metrics and submit your impact after implementing this toolkit. Your feedback helps keep our programs free for all across the globe.

## Determine Participants

Use the Trash Free Lunch Sign-Up Sheet Template to assemble your team!

- A Student Group (such as a club, before/after school program, non-school organization)
- A whole class
- The whole school

## Trash Free Lunch Sign-Up Sheet Template:



### Pro Tip:

- Working with a small group of students? Hold a single day Trash Free Lunch event
- Working with a larger team? Build a campaign around going Trash Free one day a week (ex. *Trash Free Tuesdays*)
- Is your whole school involved? Strive to have the school be Trash Free every day!

## Why Should You Go Trash Free?

The resources provided can be shown as a slideshow (see the QR code on the next page) or printed out as individual worksheets for students to learn.



## Lunches Create a Lot of Waste

Whether you're packing a full lunch for school, bringing a snack for recess or packing food to go somewhere on the weekends, choosing to pack Trash Free reduces waste, saves the environment and saves money! According to the EPA, the average American student creates 67 pounds of lunch packaging waste each school year. That's more than 18,000 pounds (about the same weight as 2 elephants!) of plastic, paper, and other non-food materials for just one average-sized elementary school (CalRecycle/EPA). [1]

### Slideshow:



## Plastic is Hard to Recycle

In 2021, only 5-6% of plastic was recycled in the United States! That means out of 100 pieces of plastic, only 5 or 6 got recycled into new items that we can use. Previously, the US sent most plastic waste to other countries like China and Turkey to get recycled, but this is no longer an option. Also, most packaging is difficult to recycle due to the material it's made of or it is dirty with leftover food or liquids. So even when we put plastic in the recycle bin, most of it will still end up in a landfill. Also, recycling facilities have a limited capacity and are not able to recycle all items they receive, which means a lot of plastic can be tossed into the landfill. This plastic packaging is made from oil, a natural resource that comes from the earth. It takes energy to make oil, and the process causes pollution throughout its entire lifespan contributing to the climate crisis. [2] & [3]

## Choose to Go Trash Free!

So what can you do about this? We all know the 3 Rs – Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Starting with the most important R, Reduce using single use items typically found in packed lunches. By making simple changes, like packing food and drinks in reusable containers and bringing reusable utensils/cloth napkins. Find even more tips below. You will reduce your waste and make your school and community more sustainable! Also, check out the fun Activity Booklet provided by the City of Long Beach below!

### Choose to Reuse Tips:



### Long Beach Activity Booklet:



## Why Trash is an Environmental Justice Issue

Waste is often classified as an environmental justice issue due to the implications associated with where it is transported. Recycling facilities, waste transfer stations, incinerators, and landfills are all largely placed in developing regions internationally or in disenfranchised communities within the US. In Long Beach, low-income communities of color were historically excluded from neighborhoods with less environmental pollution and greater public investment, and are still concentrated in the portions of the city with the worst air quality and environmental health metrics. Any one or a combination of these facilities can cause widespread pollution in addition to health issues to the communities that live nearby. [4]

## Citations

[1] - Child Nutrition/School Cafeterias



[2] - Plastics: Material-Specific Data



[3] - Top 25 Recycling Facts and Statistics for 2022



[4] - Why Plastic Pollution is an EJ Issue



## Watch These Two Short Videos to Learn Why it's Important to Reduce Your Waste!



'How to Pack a Trash Free Lunch'



'Helmets Elementary Going Green With Trash-Free Lunch Program'

## Think About It!

### Pre-Activity Questions:

- What are the most common types of packaging you see in your lunch and other kids' lunches at your school?
- What are some changes you can make in your own lunch to use less packaging and make less trash?
- Which natural resources would be saved by using reusable packaging instead of disposable packaging?
- *(For students who get hot lunch at school)* How can you reduce the amount of trash in your lunch? (i.e. eat all their food, take only items they know they will eat, use only one napkin, recycle milk cartons, etc.)

# Take Action: How to LAUNCH Trash Free Lunch

Lead students in the “Trash Free Lunch” activity with guided instructions. Check out “Pro Tips” with each step for useful help:

## 1. Assign Roles

- Determine who and how many students/staff are participating. Use the Trash Free Lunch Sign Up Sheet
- Assign students to educate peers, share the program throughout the school community, and/or keep track of the results.

## 2. Plan It Out

Decide on a date that you want to start your Trash Free Lunch campaign. Use the Trash Free Lunch Organizer and decide if you want to encourage students to go Trash Free one time, one day each week, or every day.

## 3. Count Your School’s Lunches Before LAUNCHing

- Schedule a day before your Trash Free Lunch campaign to count school lunches and how many are completely trash free, or have some trash free items such as a reusable lunch box or water bottle. This is your “audit.” Print out the Trash Free Lunch Audit worksheet and head out to the lunch area with your team. Using tally marks, count the number of students at lunchtime who have brought a packed lunch to school. Out of those students, count how many students have completely Trash Free lunches, mostly Trash Free lunches and partially Trash Free lunches. A Trash Free Lunch is one in which all items can be eaten (or reused i.e. Lunch box, water bottle, snack and food containers, utensils, napkin) and there are no single-use items or packaging. Fruit and veggie scraps such as a banana peels or apple cores should be counted as Trash Free!
- Record the data on the audit form and keep it somewhere you can access later to compare it to future audits that take place after your campaign.

Trash Free Lunch Sign Up Sheet:



Trash Free Lunch Organizer:



Trash Free Lunch Audit Worksheet:



### Pro Tip:

If there are too many lunches to count, consider taking a large sample (about 100 students) and use what you’ve found to estimate the amounts for your whole school.

## 4. Educate Your Classmates and School Staff

- Teach your peers how and **why** to pack a trash free lunch. Present the results of your audit and the Trash Free Lunch Script at a school assembly, over announcements or by going class to class.
- Spread the word about the program on campus by making posters and posting the How To Pack a Trash Free Lunch and Pack This, Not That flyers around school, on your school's website or in an online school newsletter.
- It's important to never look down on a student about bringing waste to school. Even one item in a reusable container should be celebrated! Reward all improvements with praise.
- Celebrate all positive changes! Even one item in a reusable container should be celebrated! Reward all improvements with praise.

## 5. Educate Parents

Teach the parents at your school how and why to pack Trash Free for their students by sending home the 'What is a Trash Free Lunch?' and 'Pack This, Not That' flyers in a school newsletter or posting them on the school's website.

## 6. Count Your Success!

Using your Trash Free Lunch Audit worksheet, pick a date to audit your school's lunches again.

- If you are choosing a "single day" goal for your campus to be Trash Free, conduct your post audit on that day.
- If you are choosing "one day a week" goal to be Trash Free, wait at least one week after your Campaign and conduct your audit on that day of the week.
- If you are choosing to go Trash Free every day, you can audit the school lunches weekly or monthly to see how it's going.

## 7. Report Your Success

Be sure to let the whole school know how they did and the progress they are making to reduce their waste by making announcements about the increase in Trash Free Lunches and reusable items.

### Trash Free Lunch Script:



### How to Pack a Trash Free Lunch:



### Pack This, Not That:



### Pro Tip:

Use this fun and free Activity Booklet provided by the City of Long Beach to further educate your classmates!



### What is a Trash Free Lunch?



### Pro Tip:

Purchase a fun stamp and non-toxic ink pad to stamp student's hands who are packing Trash Free items.

### Pro Tip:

Make it a contest and see which grade or class can bring the most Trash Free Lunches on a given day. Reward the winners with a party, shout-outs during school announcements, or extended recesses.

# Reflection Questions

## How'd It Go?

- What changes have you seen in students' home lunches after teaching about Trash Free Lunches?
- What single-use items do you still see the most of?
- What are some ways you can think of to reduce more waste during lunch and in your life outside of school?

## Report Students' Impact

Congratulations!! You've implemented Trash Free Lunch! Don't let all that hard work go unnoticed. **Submit your results by scanning the QR code below.**



Project ongoing? No problem! Let us know what you've done so far.

By reporting your impact, Grades of Green can:

- CELEBRATE and elevate your students' hard work and success.
- Offer our programs FREE for all students across the globe.
- AWARD stipends and certificates to hard-working educators and students.

Please take a few minutes to submit your results. Thank you!

## Provided Resources

Trash Free Lunch Sign-Up Sheet:



Trash Free Lunch Organizer:





Trash Free Lunch Audit Form:



Trash Free Lunch Slides:



Pack This, Not That Flyer:



What is a Trash Free Lunch?



How to Pack a Trash Free Lunch:



Trash Free Lunch Presentation Script:



Trash Free Lunch Parent Education Flyer:



'Trash Free, That's Me!' Cards:



Trash Free Lunch Wrap-Up Form:



Toolkit Resources – Google Drive Folder:



**Congrats on completing the Trash Free Lunch Eco-Toolkit!  
Did you enjoy this toolkit? Find your next project below!**

