



**PLASTIC FREE  
MKE**

## **Plastic-Free MKE Education Toolkit**

### Creative Activities and Plastic-Free DIY

#### **Background:**

We live on the shores of one of the five Great Lakes, Lake Michigan, and a major source of freshwater in the world. Unfortunately, 22 million pounds of plastic enter our Great Lakes each year, and about half of it ends up in Lake Michigan. Plastic is in our drinking water, it's in our beer, and it's in our fish. Plastic is in us!

There are many ways to create positive change in our communities by refusing single-use plastic and finding alternatives in our homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Creative expression, through visual arts, crafts, and writing can foster awareness and spark change. How would you like to express your creativity and influence others to create a plastic-free Milwaukee?

#### **Activity Summary:**

Students will create works of art with a plastic-free focus. They will use visual arts, crafts, or written expression as an educational tool to show how plastic is a threat to our environment, health, and future, and to show plastic-free alternatives through DIY replacements. The results could be displayed in school, on social media, as part of a campaign to reduce single-use plastic, or as part of a contest-- the possibilities are endless. Browse the ideas below to start creating!

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### **DIY Crafts: Replace a single-use plastic item with a do-it-yourself solution**

#### **T-Shirt Tote Bag**

Make a grocery bag from an old T-shirt

**Ages:** 7 and older

**Length of Activity:** 20 -30 minutes

**Materials:** Old T-shirt, pair of scissors

**Safety Consideration:** Requires use of scissors

**Tutorial:** [DIY T-shirt tote bag](#)



### Plastic-Free Gift Wrapping

Most wrapping paper and ribbon is coated with plastic. What could you use instead?

Material alternatives include: Kraft paper, brown paper bags, fabric, potato stamps, fingerprint designs, stencils, poster paint, raffia, string, twine, and natural materials like flowers, twigs, and leaves.

**Resources:**

- [7 Zero Waste Gift Wrapping Ideas](#)
- [Potato Stamping](#)



### Beeswax Wrap

Make a beeswax wrap to replace plastic wrap

**Ages:** 7 and older with adult supervision/assistance with a hot oven

**Length of Activity:** One hour

**Materials:** 100% cotton fabric, cosmetic grade beeswax pellets, scissors or pinking shears, parchment paper, baking sheet(s), hangers, clothespins or binder clips, ruler

**Safety Consideration:** Requires handling scissors, an oven heated to 200 F, and handling a hot baking sheet

**Tutorial:** [How to make DIY Beeswax wraps](#)



### Felted Dryer Balls

Dryer sheets are made of polyester (that's plastic), are single-use, and often contain chemicals harmful to human health. Here's how you can replace them with felt dryer balls made of wool!

**Ages:** 7 and older, with adult assistance/supervision with boiling water

**Length of Activity:** 2 hours

**Safety Consideration:** Requires access to a stove for boiling water, using a dryer, and use of scissors for cutting yarn or fabric

**Tutorial:** [How to Make Felted Wool Dryer Balls](#)



### Visual Arts Activities

#### **Cartoon or Comic Strip**

Draw funny scenes with characters confronting or avoiding single-use plastic. Take it further and use a cartoon maker app to share your cartoon on social media.

**Resource:** [Comic Strip Tutorial](#)

#### **Collage**

Make a collage using plastic litter, magazine cuttings, or photos. You can share your creations with others and on social media!

**Resource:** [Collage Ideas](#)

#### **Graphic logo**

Design a logo for your plastic free home, classroom, or school.

#### **Marine Debris Mask**

Create masks based on students' faces using recovered materials from marine debris.

**Resource:** [Marine Debris Mask Full Lesson](#)



#### **Spread Awareness by Creating Paintings, Posters, Screen Prints**

Eye-catching artworks start a dialogue about social justice, activists, and others who see room for improvement in their community and beyond. Follow the five steps outlined in [this video](#) to create your own political art, and let your work shout a message from the rooftops!

**Resource:** [Video Tutorial](#)

#### **Photography**

Use photography to document plastic pollution or plastic free solutions. Share your photographs on Instagram and other social media platforms.

**Resource:** [How Photography Can Transform Social Justice In America](#)



#### **Outdoor Art**

Do a cleanup of a beach, river, school yard, or park and use the garbage collected to make an art sculpture. Display the sculpture in your school playground or cafeteria to spark discussion on eliminating single-use plastic.

**Resource:** [Examples of what one school did](#)

## Plastic-Free MKE Education Toolkit

### Plastic Pollution Awareness Day

Choose a day for your home, classroom, or school to give up all single-use plastic.

**Resource:** [Here's what one student did - Hannah 4 Change](#)

### Plastic Monster

Plastic-Free MKE has a plastic monster made of 500 plastic bags, the average number of plastic bags an American uses in a year. It's used at public events for educating people and encouraging them to use reusable bags. Make your own Plastic Monster from bags, mixed plastics, or other single-use items. What's the message you're trying to convey?

**Resource:** [How to Make Your Own Plastic Monster](#)



## Writing Prompts

Create a Slogan about single use plastic: Here's a sample: " It's just one straw...said 8 billion people".

What would your daily life look like without plastic? Start with the moment you wake up. Keep a small notebook and pencil to jot down your plastic use. Share your results with others doing the same.



Write a persuasive essay in which you convince someone close to you to give up a single-use plastic item. [Here are some tips for persuasive writing.](#)

Write a letter to legislators or to businesses asking them to take actions against plastic pollution.

Resource: [How to Write a Letter to an Elected Official](#)

Resource: Ask stores to drop single-use plastic. [Here's an example letter.](#)

Write a children's book on an aspect of single-use plastic. How do you explain to a child why there is so much plastic trash on the beach?

## Plastic-Free MKE Education Toolkit

Interview someone in their 60's, 70's or 80's about their life before single-use plastic. How did they store food? How did they shop? What did they eat? How was it packaged? What cleaning products did they use?

Write a joke or riddle about single-use plastic.

Write an obituary for a plastic product you would like to see eliminated. When was it born? When did people start using it? What was its impact? What replaced it? How did that happen? Is it really dead...or is it "The Floating or Flying or Walking Dead"?

Write a rap or song about single-use plastic.



Create a comic book with a superhero who fights plastic pollution. What is your hero's name? What super power do they have? How do they fight plastic?

Resource: [How to Make a Comic Strip](#)

Write a poem. Poetry doesn't have to rhyme but here are a few words that rhyme with plastic: fantastic, drastic, elastic, spastic, mastic. Can you think of others?

Write a short narrative from the perspective of a single-use plastic. How were you "born"? What were some of your major life moments or accomplishments? How did you "Die"? Be sure to include not only the life of your single-use plastic, but the thoughts and feelings of that plastic throughout its life.

Think of an item that you use on a daily basis. Imagine that item being a single-use plastic. What are the benefits of your item being made to last? What could it not do if you had to throw it away after everyday? Convince your reader that the way your item was made is more useful than a single-use plastic.

Use the conventions of the horror genre to write a story of the afterlife of a single-use plastic. Does it haunt its user? Does it roam the streets like a zombie? Does it lurch in the water like Cthulhu? How does it bring terror?



## Plastic-Free MKE Education Toolkit

Imagine a world without single-use plastics. How would your daily routine change? What would you have to replace in your life with a more sustainable option? How would your life change?

Describe a future where everything is a single-use plastic. Would people still have their identity? Would hobbies be the same? Would people have possessions? What would the economy look like if everyone had to buy everything every time they wanted to use it? What would food look like? Entertainment? Clothing? Would it be a utopian or dystopian future?

### **Need some more inspiration?**

Here's a sample of what 13 visual artists created from plastic waste found in the ocean – [Read the Time article here!](#)

Young Plastic Pollution Warriors – [Read about this boot camp that trains young people to fight plastic pollution](#)