



**LifeSmarts**  
*Learn it. Live it.*

## Key Points

### FOOD WASTE HURTS THE PLANET AND THE WALLET

Throwing out edible food wastes water, energy, and money spent growing, transporting, and buying it.

### MOST WASTE HAPPENS AFTER PURCHASE

A lot of food gets tossed at home or school due to spoilage, confusion over expiration dates, or oversized portions.

### EVERYONE CAN HELP REDUCE WASTE

Simple habits like smarter shopping, proper storage, and donating extras can keep food out of landfills. Small changes in daily routines can make a big collective impact.

## Core Concepts

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF FOOD WASTE

When food is thrown away, all the resources used to produce it—water, fuel, fertilizer—are wasted too. In landfills, rotting food releases methane gas, a major contributor to climate change.

### COMMON CAUSES OF WASTE

Overbuying, poor meal planning, misunderstanding "best by" labels, and restaurants or cafeterias serving more than people can eat all lead to large amounts of wasted food.

### ECONOMIC COSTS

Families lose money each year from food that goes bad or isn't eaten. At a global level, billions of dollars are wasted annually due to discarded food.

### SOLUTIONS AT HOME AND SCHOOL

Planning meals, storing food properly, sharing surplus food, composting, and encouraging "take what you'll eat" policies help reduce waste.

### ROLE OF FOOD DONATION AND RECOVERY

Nonprofits and food banks can collect surplus food from stores, restaurants, and households to help feed people in need instead of throwing it away.

### HOW TEENS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Students can lead school awareness campaigns, organize food drives, or start composting programs to cut down waste in their communities.

# Reducing Food Waste

## Additional Resources

### YouTube - Food Waste causes Climate Change. Here's how we stop it.

How food waste both in America and across the world is a massive problem for climate change, the environment, and hunger

<https://bit.ly/415d3pk>

### EPA - Educating Youth About Wasted Food

Lesson plans about food waste, composting

<https://bit.ly/47tFnbp>

### Food Recovery Network

Student-led movement to recover surplus food and end hunger in the U.S.

<https://bit.ly/4mDPGLL>

### ReFED

Food waste solutions and statistics to support food waste reduction efforts in the U.S.

<https://bit.ly/4fl8RSA>

## Listen to the Podcast



## Explore and Explain

1. Why is throwing away food considered a climate problem, not just a trash problem?
2. How do date labels like “sell by,” “use by,” and “best by” influence what people keep or toss?
3. Where along the food system—farms, stores, restaurants, schools, or homes—does the most waste happen, and why?
4. Which strategies actually reduce waste in daily life (meal planning, portion sizes, storage, composting, donation), and what evidence supports them?

*Understanding food waste shows how everyday choices can save money, cut emissions, and get surplus food to people who need it.*

## Food Waste



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## Acronyms

### **FAO**

Food and Agriculture Organization

### **FIFO**

First In, First Out

### **NRDC**

Natural Resources Defense Council

### **USDA**

U.S. Department of Agriculture

### **WMP**

Waste Management Plan

## Vocabulary

### **COMPOSTING**

Turning food scraps and other organic waste into nutrient-rich soil

### **FARM-TO-TABLE**

A movement to reduce waste by getting food directly from farms to consumers

### **FOOD INSECURITY**

Not having consistent access to enough affordable, nutritious food

### **FOOD RECOVERY**

Saving safe, uneaten food and giving it to people instead of throwing it away

### **IMPERFECT PRODUCE**

Edible fruits and vegetables that look odd or have blemishes, often wasted due to appearance

### **MEAL PLANNING**

Choosing meals ahead of time to buy only what you need and reduce waste

### **PORTION CONTROL**

Serving the right amount of food to avoid throwing out extras

### **SELL-BY-DATE**

The date a store should stop selling a product—food is often still safe to eat after this

### **SUPPLY CHAIN WASTE**

Food lost before it reaches stores—during growing, processing, or transport

### **ZERO WASTE KITCHEN**

A kitchen that tries to create no food waste through planning, repurposing, and composting