



# First Plastic Bag Free Day

September 12, 2009

NoMoreBaggage.Org

**Why Plastic Bag Free Day:** the purpose of plastic bag free day is to inspire as many people as possible to form a re-usable bag habit which will ultimately help reduce the bag costs retail stores have been absorbing to service those customers with disposable bags who forget their bags or have not started to use one. Our goal is for merchants and consumers to work together to reduce the use of disposable bags so we can move toward zero waste thinking in respect for the future of the planet we all share.

**What is Plastic Bag Free Day?:** This September 12, 2009 will be the first ever plastic bag free day which is a voluntary effort by retail stores across UK and internationally to conduct business without giving out a single disposable shopping bag for the entire day or for at least one hour of the day from 5-6 pm in your time zone. The day is also to encourage a voluntary effort for individuals to remember to bring their own re-usable bag to shop with for the entire day.

(Retailers: **No paper** or **plastic bags**, **no free bags** for this special event, Shoppers: Please spread the word and bring your own bag on Sept. 12/09 and beyond).

**What are the steps to participate?:** Just 3 easy steps:

1) **post a sign** in your store windows, by the registers, and even on shopping carts:



download sample graphic file [here](#) for Register Signs and Shopping Cart tags to remind your customers of this special international day: <http://www.usemeover.com/pbf>

Hawaii Merchants participating from 5-6pm HST  
[download register and shopping cart posters here](#)



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## What are the steps .....cont'd

**2)** Alert your staff before the day that on September 12, 2009 there will be no disposable bags available for customers (no paper or plastic) and no free re-usable bags either in honour of plastic bag free day.

*Here are some ideas for store policies for you to adopt:*

- a) have **re-usable bags for sale** and prominently displayed by the registrar on September 12, 2009 and weeks prior (ideally made of sustainable materials that do not contain plastic such as JUTE, organic cotton, re-cycled cotton).
- b) give a significant refund to customers who remember to bring their own bag on September 12, 2009 (such as 15 cents), or offer a prize drawing gift.
- c) **Be resourceful**, have used boxes left over from packaging available for use to pack items that can be recycled later. Put items in cart to wheel out without bags as another option.
- d) have a **security personel** available at exit doors checking receipts especially for people who do not use bags and carry items out in cart or by hand.
- e) display **bag edict tips** by the door entrance reminding people NOT to place items inside bags until they have paid (or they will look like they are stealing).

**3)** Sign-up for plastic bag free day [here](#) and we will put you on the international map to help promote your business as participating in this great day to help more people form a bag habit.



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## Facts: Plastic Bags

- The world once functioned without using any plastic shopping bags prior to their invention in the 1970's, and without disposable paper bags prior to the early 1900's. In fact, disposable paper shopping bags were only just invented in 1912 by Walter Deubner who charged 5 cents per bag in his small Minnesota grocery store. Prior to this the world used re-usable bags.
- Today the world uses anywhere between anywhere from **500 billion to 1.2 trillion** disposable plastic bags a year. (epa.gov) (Lancaster.gov.uk)
- That averages out somewhere between 290-300 plastic bags used per person per year (Parliament.UK) (londoncouncils.gov.uk)
- That comes out to **over one million bags being used per minute.**
- On average we use each plastic bag for approximately 12 minutes before disposing. It then lasts in the environment for decades.
- Some reports estimate that plastic bags can take over 400 years to degrade. (Parliament.NSW.gov.AU) (BBC news)
- An estimated 17 billion plastic bags are given away annually by United Kingdom supermarkets-enough plastic to cover an area the size of London, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and west Yorkshire combined. Note: this estimate don't state all retailers only supermarkets. (Parliament.UK) (London.gov.uk)
- On average we only recycle 1 plastic bag in every 200 we use. (londoncouncils.gov.uk)
- In 1995, high numbers of plastic bags (more than **70% of total litter**) were reported in dredge samples from the continental shelf along the French and Spanish Atlantic Coast (Galgani et al, 1995). During a survey of floating marine debris conducted in the South East Pacific plastic bags **far outnumbered other items at 47.6% of all items.** (UNEP/GPA).
- In the marine environment plastic bag litter is lethal, killing many species - including sea birds, whales, dolphins, seals, seal lions and turtles every year. (Planet Ark) (NSW.GOV.AU)
- Plastic bags can be mistaken for food and consumed by a wide range of marine species. Ingestion of litter such as plastic bags can cause physical damage and mechanical blockage of the oesophagus and digestive system, resulting in a false sensation of fullness or satiation, as the litter may remain in the stomach. This can lead to internal infections, starvation and death. (MCS) (environment.gov.au) (plasticdebris.org)
- Plastic bags have been recorded as a cause of entanglement in marine animals. Entanglement can restrict movement, leading to starvation, drowning or suffocation. (MSC) (UNEP)
- Once an animal dies from either entanglement or plastic ingestion, their bodies decompose and the plastic is released back into the environment where it can kill again. (MCS)(Planet Ark) (NOAA)
- Plastic bags, as with all forms of plastic, do not biodegrade. They photodegrade, breaking down into smaller and smaller toxic bits contaminating soil, waterways, oceans and entering the food web when ingested by animals.