

# ZeroWasteCity

## KNOW YOUR MATERIALS

We know it can all get a little confusing when you hear about the problems with plastic in the news. Who even knew there was plastic in their coffee cup? (hint: it's the shiny stuff on the inside!)



### Plastic

There are loads of different types of plastic. Some are clear, some are coloured. Some can be recycled, some cannot. But one thing they all have in common is the damage they cause to our environment.

Plastic can be a great material; but only when it is used correctly. Single-use disposable products are NOT a good use of plastic.

### Biodegradable

If something is biodegradable, it will break down in the natural environment.

Biodegradable plastics can now be made with similar strength, plasticity and elasticity properties of non-biodegradable plastics, and made into products using the same technologies (e.g. film processing or moulding).

The fact that a plastic is described as biodegradable does not mean that it should be freely released into the environment in an uncontrolled manner.

The speed, method and nature of biodegradation differs between materials and users should question the behaviour of biodegradable materials before using them in any application.

### Compostable

It looks just like plastic and performs just like it too. It can be made into a thread, thin sheets or moulded into a variety of shapes.

The crucial difference? It's made from organic renewable resources like corn starch or sugar cane. This means the material can completely decompose after it's usable life.

But there's a catch. It will only breakdown in an industrial composting system, and certainly not in a marine environment. So, unless you have a food waste management system in place, compostable might not be the perfect alternative you are looking for.

### Disposable vs Reusable

We think this one is pretty obvious. If you use it once and throw it away; it's disposable. Use it more than once; it's reusable.

So, what's the better option? Reusables may be more expensive and contain more material, but when a product is used multiples times, the overall cost and environmental impact is much lower than disposable, single use products.

***Remember, not all biodegradable plastic is compostable, but all compostable plastic is biodegradable.***