

# San Francisco State University

## Living Green Like a Gator Guide

*to reduce waste*



# Acknowledgements

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Living Green Like a Gator Guide was made possible by the previous works of the Environmental Resource Center (ERC) and the Office of Sustainability.

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While alligators aren't all green, they know how to take care of themselves with limited resources. This is made for students to learn more on how to live sustainably.

Hence, living *green!*

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**SAN FRANCISCO  
STATE UNIVERSITY**

# Why be a Greener Gator?

By now you are probably aware that caring for the health of our community takes constant work, and while sometimes it can be tedious, our efforts ensure that we have a place to live comfortably. We're not talking about your houses or rooms, but the planet as a shared home.

Given that the actions of our predecessors, together with our actions, have made our future precarious, this guide was made for students with tips and quick switches to be more environmentally conscious. The more attention you pay to what you consume and do every day, the less tedious it becomes.

In San Francisco, living more sustainably is not an inconvenience if you know where to go and how to process our daily living impact on the planet. Even as a commuter, you can still apply this guide to your residential city and home.

Because it is us and the future generations who will face the consequences of yesterday's choices, but today's decisions can help slow down those consequences

# Considerations

**Sustainable swaps** have the main goal: REDUCE waste, especially landfill. However, you are recommended to work within your means. Not everyone can afford to go 100% overnight. If you already own disposable items, you can wait until those items have finished its use to replace them. Small steps count! Sustainability can start as a small hobby into a habit.

**New Gator Habits** are action items for your personal sustainability. Personal sustainability is prioritizing your mental and physical health, conserving your energy, budgeting for financial wellness, and more! This includes reducing the guilt you may feel when thinking about climate change or breaking your vegan streak.

**Peer activism** can be bring a memorable reusable item as a gift for your loved ones and teach them how to lower their waste. It can be creating a save-energy pledge campaign for your floor in the residential building. It could be helping a friend sort and compost their lunch scraps. Your influence can start at a small step.



# Sustainable Swaps

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## Bathroom

Good hygiene is the top priority, and there are many disposable items that comes with taking care of your health like:

- cleaning bathroom utensils
- cleaning products
- cotton items (cotton swab)
- floss
- hairbrush
- toothbrush
- toothpaste
- razors
- sunscreen
- skincare

When restocking on your skincare, more and more brands are offering refillables. You don't need a fancy bottle and even a travel container or a small jar with a pump is okay to use! The refillable products help save money compared to restocking with more disposable containers.

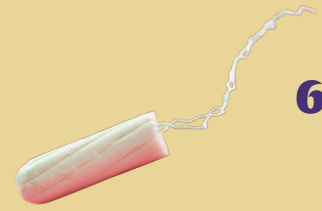
Here are some swaps we recommend:

- Bamboo brush (toothbrush, hairbrush, etc)
- Replaceable 100% silk/bamboo floss refills
- Silicone swab or paper stick swabs
- Tooth tabs or tooth powder

Make sure the items come in compostable or reusable packaging.



# Menstrual Care



Many of the menstrual items are not degradable. The following swaps we recommend are:

- organic cotton pads, tampons
- period underwear
- silicone menstrual cup.



Menstrual disposable products are meant to be replaced constantly throughout the cycle, so the plastic packaging and the mix of material goes to trash. The trash later ends up in landfill and contaminates the nearby bodies of water with microplastics. That's why we aim to reduce and lower contamination to both our body and the water.

# Shower

Many markets are now selling package free soap bars for shower use, such as shampoo bars, handsoaps, and lotion bars.



Avoid nylon as nylon is **not** compostable.

Buy mayan loofah or brushes but avoid the ones with 10% nylon.



Switch to a shower head with flow stop control when it's time to lather.

# Bedroom

We usually unwind at the end of the day, so we recommend the need durable and long-term items. The following swaps to avoid future work and to preserve both your energy and your energy bill.

Bamboo/hemp/silk/cotton/or wood **window curtains** for natural light.

**Blackout curtains/blinds** for cool temperature and sleep.

LED light bulbs.

**Power strip** that turns off during heavy electric power traffic times.

Warm **100% cotton** loungewear to avoid heater.

Since 8 hours per day are spent on our beds, investing in a sustainable bed is as important as comfort. Given that these items are long-term, but still recommended to be disposed of after a while, thinking of natural materials like latex, cotton, and hemp is important.

Shop for **natural latex** and **plant fibers** for bedding.

When looking for furniture, thrifting is recommended, even online. Keep an eye out for ethically sourced furniture.





# Kitchen

Modern life keeps us at high speeds and eating on the go can be detrimental to our environment, so saving prepped meals or left overs is the best way to not only save money but prevent food waste and reduce your carbon impact. We all know by now that microplastics and related chemicals are becoming an increasing danger to human health, so what kind of reusable containers can we rely on to help us be more environmentally responsible?

It turns out that **silicone**, a “man-made polymer created from silicon,” the natural element found in sand, is more resistant to high temperatures and UV, so it does not react with chemicals or release them, it is made only of “silicon, oxygen and other elements (usually carbon and hydrogen), and it does not break down into micro particles like plastic does. There are some downsides to silicone as produced currently, one is that the raw material is sand.

**Pick platinum cured silicone, aka medical or food grade silicone** to avoid certain silicone from entering your food when cooking.

# Kitchen

To reduce our paper and plastic waste, here are some swaps:

- bamboo cooking utensils
- compostable hemp coffee filter
- cotton produce bags
- metal mesh coffee filter
- silicone food cover
- resealable silicone bags



For cotton items hold produce, be sure to wash the cotton bags regularly and avoid moisture to keep your produce fresh.

For dishwashing, you can find similar materials for the bathroom swaps for dish sponges and soaps:

- bamboo dish brush
- coconut noir dish scrubber
- copper dish scrubber
- dish soap bar
- mayan loofah dish sponge



Note, the loofah dish sponge may look thin at first, but it expands after the first use!

For those who look for vegan products in the stores, look for produce in compostable film instead of plastic film.

# Laundry



For a very long time, laundry items have been packaged in non-recyclable plastics or made with ingredients that are not sustainable like petroleum distillates, irritants, endocrine disruptors, and some even contribute to carcinogenic-fume releases in the waterways. Likewise, opting for compostable or minimally-packaged items will help save money from buying non-compostable disposable items.

Fortunately, we as consumers can advocate for package-free goods to the market and support local businesses that provides those goods items.

Here are the Sustainable Swaps to replace bottled laundry detergent and disposable dryer sheets:

- laundry detergent sheets
- silicone agitators
- wool dryer balls



Silicone agitators can be used for both washing and drying cycles. During the wash, the agitators force the soil and stains to the surface to be washed away. In the dryer, the agitators help hot air flow more and shorten the drying cycle.



# Desk/Office

Even as a student, you can find swaps for school supplies.

- 100% post-consumer recycled chair mats
- 100% recycled notebook
- 100% recycled printing paper
- 95% compostable pens
- Refillable pens



Standard wooden pencil shavings (with no plastic wrap) are compostable.

If you work in an office, look at their coffee and water stations. If they have disposable cups, bring your own mug to reduce waste, even if it's not in your own home.

Are your notes always temporary?  
Try out the following swaps:

- Reusable whiteboard notebook
- Reusable sticky notes



Don't have a budget for office items?  
You can practice Upcycling by crafting  
disposable items with a new purpose.

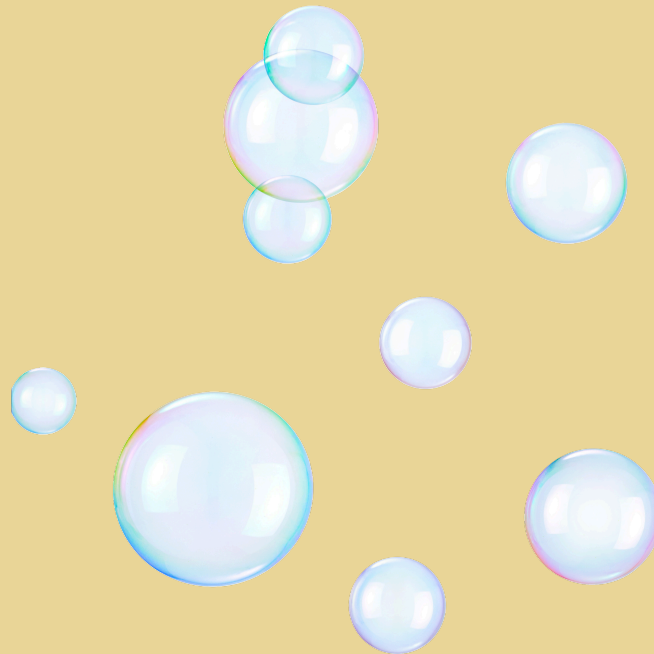


# Glitter is Litter

San Francisco State University is proud to see our gators thrive and celebrate their success with confetti. However, the plastic microbeads and metallic confettis are harmful to our water and difficult to keep our campus clean. Especially with microplastics on the rise, we have to acknowledge that glitter is litter.

You can create or join a "Glitter is Litter" campaign and share how you are using other alternatives. Here are some swaps!

- flower petals (dried or fresh)
- leaves
- seeds
- bubbles



# 2

## New Gator Habits

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### Lower Carbon Footprint

Reducing animal agriculture consumption can reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) and contribute to our health. You don't have to be 100% vegan.

Most cities host farmer's markets once a week. You can purchase fresh produce from local vendors and have a higher quality in your diet.

The SFSU campus holds a Farmer's Market once a week. Be sure to check in with the **Associated Students** for the schedule and more information!



During an intense political climate, you can protest against injustice by **limiting your spending**. Especially since large businesses are mixed with politics, you have the power NOT to spend and that makes a big difference.



# Lower Carbon Footprint

Use **public active transport** if accessible. In the Bay Area, Bath hosts the annual "Bike to Work" day in the month of May.

Plan local trips, and when you can, **avoid flights** or contribute to CO2 offsets. These are "donations" you can make to an airline who has partnered with a carbon offset company like [carbonfund.org](http://carbonfund.org) to fund energy efficiency, forestry, and renewable energy projects.



# Water Conservation

Gallons of water are invested to produce goods, whether it is produce and meat. However, water is also used during services like plastic packaging and recycling.

That is why we must lower our water usage and waste while finding alternatives of plastic packaging.

Along with the flow-control showerhead from the Sustainable Swaps, taking **shorter showers** is ideal. Shower timers are available to buy online.

The San Francisco Water Power Sewer offers free water-saving devices from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. Instructions and resources are available at their website (<https://sfpuc.org/>).

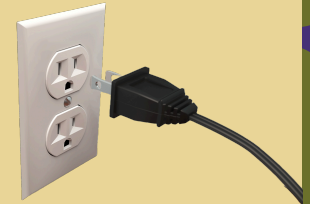




# Energy Conservation

Another aspect of sustainability is choosing the right appliances and furniture, as well as being conscious of their energy consumption and our habits to reduce energy waste.

When not in use, turn off and disconnect your devices.



Along with the flow-control showerhead from the Sustainable Swaps, taking **shorter showers** is ideal. Shower timers are available to buy online.

Use **cold cycle** for your laundry instead of hot water. To shorten your drying time, use **wool balls** or **silicone agitators** from the Sustainability Swaps. If you have the space, air-dry is the best alternative.

When using wool dryer balls, avoid adding fragrance oils because it is a fire risk. You can use scent sachets in your closet and drawers instead.



# Upcycling

Upcycling helps you practice your creativity and create a new purpose for disposable items. Here are some examples:

Using eggshells as plant pod with a seed each and the egg carton to hold the eggshells.

Milk cartons can turn into bird feeders.

Old large T-shirts into tote bags (sew-free tutorials)!

Plastic netting, jugs, and mixed fabrics can be useful in potting and gardening projects.

Tin cans into pencil holders or flower vases.

You can host a **craft workshop** on upcycling with friends and neighbors with clean, disposed items to work together!



# **3 Peer Activism**

## **Peer Influence**

The most impactful source is peer-to-peer influence. Whether it's from our friends, family, or acquaintances, we take their information more seriously. However, education starts with exposure, not force. Be mindful when informing your peers on how to be environmentally-conscious.

## **Pledge Campaigns**

If you still in residential suites on campus, you can make pledge campaigns! The campaign topic is of your choice, whether it's conserving water or saving energy. You can create an online sign-up sheet and create a virtual badge for those who sign up.

For those who don't live on campus, you can still sign up for a pledge as long as you are following the topic at home. It's a fun family activity to host as a theme for the month besides April.

# Zero-Waste Activism

Environmental issues have become inevitably political and subject to ridicule, so it is no surprise these important problems have been ignored. This is why our collective power has become one of the biggest drivers of change and knowing how to use it is something we can familiarize ourselves with.

In the age of the internet and post-pandemic, our involvement can be remote, but also it can call for presence. You can build presence in your social media or even by choosing to leave a voicemail to your Senator or House Representative, instead of sending a letter or an email.

Similar to a pledge campaign, you can join or organize a group to write letters and leave voicemails. Acting united as a group holds a bigger message.

For that same purpose, feel free to use the following templates (made by the ERC) to urge your state to consider breaking away from plastics, for Amazon to not send you any more plastic packaging, and you can also use the formats to apply it to other issues that concern you and affect you.

(Month) (Day) (Year)

The Honorable (Congress Member's First Name & Last Name)

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(Room Number),

(House Oce Building)

City, State (Zip Code)

RE: HR 5845 - Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act

Dear Congress Member,

The world faces an existential threat in the form of climate change and plastic pollution. As we work together to take bold climate action, while simultaneously upholding environmental justice and protecting the health of people living in frontline and fence-line communities, we must support The Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act of 2021 (BFFPPA), which is being re-introduced by Sen. Merkley and Rep. Lowenthal in the coming weeks.

Furthermore, we need to shift to an extended producer responsibility approach to plastic packaging and manufacturing, and a minimum recycled-material requirement is imperative to stop the production of virgin plastic, but we must adopt bio-based packaging alternatives and require declarations of commitment from plastic waste producers. If New Zealand was able to get 12 companies under declaration to produce 100% compostable, refillable, or recyclable by 2025, the United States cannot be lag behind, being the number one global producer of waste.

Yes, we need to update our recycling capacity and infrastructure, but phasing out multi-layer packaging from the market and cooperating with cleanup at the community level, providing local governments with infrastructure for an increase in compostable capacities. Yes, we need to implement taxes for producers of the covered products and also retailers who are non-compliant, but we also need to incentivize retailers appropriately for employing compostable, refillable, or 100% recyclable options, in that order. And finally, yes, a refund of 10 cents for recyclable items is a good compliment to investing in marginalized communities for cleanup and mitigation of pollution, but we also need to implement an accessible way to sort and return refillables at retailers across the country, recreating sustainable habits and investing in the communities most affected by pollution.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely, (Name)

(Street Address) (City, State, Zip code)

# Request to Amazon for less plastic packaging

To: cs-reply@amazon.com

Subject: Request for Minimal Packaging

Hi,

My name is (Name and Last Name). The email address attached to my Amazon account is (email address).

I'm requesting that Amazon use minimal packaging in all of my future orders. Please note on my account to avoid plastic packaging like bubble wrap and plastic air pillows when fulfilling my orders

## One-Page Flyer

On the next page, there is a one-page flyer on "Living Green Like a Gator" guide. You can hang it on the fridge or in a shared space for everyone to read and see!

# Living Green like a Gator Guide



Recycle loose, clean items



Turn off after computer use



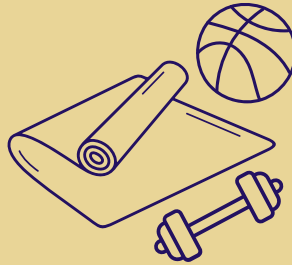
Compost plants and food scraps



Fresh air with plants



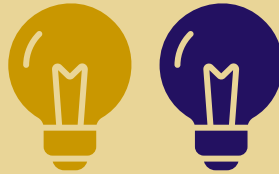
Turn off the tap



Visit Mashouf Wellness Center



Dine with reusables



Upgrade bulb, lights off



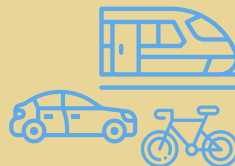
Laundry with cold water



Shop local in Farmer Markets



Air dry your clothes



Active transport and carpooling



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# For more information

For more on sorting waste and new sustainable habits, visit Recology and our SFSU Office of Sustainability website!

<https://www.recology.com/recology-san-francisco/what-goes-where/>

<https://sustain.sfsu.edu/>

Depending on your residential city, research on the waste facility in your area for their waste sorting guide.

See you later, gator!



