

# GET SMART: TAKE THE CHALLENGE

## KEEP GOOD FOOD FROM GOING TO WASTE

### WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Did you know that in 2013 Americans threw 35 million tons of food into landfills and incinerators? Research shows that nearly everyone wastes more than they think they do. The **Food: Too Good to Waste** Challenge will help you figure out how much food is really going to waste in your home and what you can do to waste less. By making small shifts in how you shop for, prepare, and store food, you can save time and money, and keep the valuable resources used to produce and distribute food from going to waste!

### WHAT DO YOU NEED?

You only need a few basic tools to get started, which include 1) a pen/pencil, 2) paper or printed worksheets, 3) small garbage bags, and 4) a small scale (optional).

### GET SMART: SEE HOW MUCH FOOD (AND MONEY) YOU ARE REALLY THROWING AWAY

**WEEKS 1 & 2:** Measure how much food your family wastes in a week and record the volume and/or weight.

**WEEKS 3 through 5:** Try out one or more of the smart strategies listed below while continuing to measure how much goes to waste each week. Keep notes on what works to reduce food waste and what doesn't.

- **Smart Shopping: Buy What You Need** – Make a shopping list with the Meals-In-Mind Shopping List template based on how many meals you expect to eat at home before your next shopping trip. By buying no more than what you expect to use, you will be more likely to use it up and keep it fresh.
- **Smart Storage: Keep Fruits and Vegetables Fresh** – Store produce so it stays fresh longer with the help of the Fruits and Vegetable Storage Guide.
- **Smart Prep: Prep Now, Eat Later** – By preparing perishable foods as soon as possible, preferably post shopping, you'll make it easier to serve snacks and meals later in the week, saving time, effort and money.
- **Smart Saving: Eat What You Buy** – This involves being mindful of leftovers and old ingredients that need using up. The "Eat First" prompt can be used to designate an area in your refrigerator for leftovers and food that won't keep long.

**Week 6:** Measure and record your final weekly food waste amount. See how much food (and money) you saved compared to weeks one and two.

### GET READY

You can find all the printed materials you need to take the FTGTW Challenge available for download at <http://www2.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food>

They include:

- This instruction sheet which includes the recording worksheet.
- Meals in Mind Shopping List Template
- Fruit and Vegetable Storage Guide
- Eat Me First Prompt

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### TIPS FOR TAKING THE CHALLENGE

1. Explain the challenge to members of your household/community and ask for their participation.
2. At the start of each week, line one paper bag with a green compostable bag. Over the course of the week, place all your PREVENTABLE food waste into the bag. Discard NON-EDIBLE food in the usual manner. (PREVENTABLE food waste is both food you bought to eat but has since spoiled and food that was prepared but not eaten and was then thrown away. NON-EDIBLE food waste is everything you wouldn't normally eat, such as banana peels, egg shells, apple cores and chicken bones.)
3. At the end of each week, measure both the weight and the volume of food waste in the bag. Record both the volume and the weight for the week on the attached worksheet. Once you get started, it should take no more than 15 minutes a week to measure and record your food waste.
4. If the bag fills before the end of seven days, weigh or record the volume of the full bag and record how many days you collected food in that bag. Then begin collection in a new bag. At the end of the week, total your weight and/or volume of food waste for the entire week.
5. After you record the weight and volume of food wasted for the week, dispose of the collection bag, including food, appropriately and as acceptable for your collection service, by composting, through organics collection or in the garbage.
6. Except for the new strategies you try starting in week 3, keep to your usual routine as much as possible during the challenge. For example, unless you regularly clean out your freezer, do not clean it throughout the challenge.
7. At the end of week 6, compare your totals for weeks 1 and 2 to weeks 3 through 6 and see how much food you saved from going to waste! Many families have reduced their food waste by 25% or more.

### ADDITIONAL WASTE COLLECTION TIPS:

- If you are concerned about leakage, then you might use a plastic bag as a second liner.
- If concerned about odor, you can clip the top of the bag shut; or you can start using a new bag mid-week, as long as you track the total volume of waste for the whole week.
- Do not collect liquid waste such as soup or food-soiled paper products.

### AFTER THE CHALLENGE

Once you've completed the challenge, share your successes and lessons learned with other individuals or organizations who may be interested in reducing wasted food.

For more information on sustainable management of food, please visit <http://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food>

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### RECORDING WORKSHEET

#### WEEK 1

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight  
\_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected

#### NOTES (WHAT GOES TO WASTE AND WHY)

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#### WEEK 2

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight  
\_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected

#### NOTES (WHAT GOES TO WASTE AND WHY)

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#### Totals – Weeks 1 and 2

\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight

#### Averages – Weeks 1 and 2

Total Volume  $\div$  2 = \_\_\_\_\_ Total Weight  $\div$  2 = \_\_\_\_\_

#### WEEK 3

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight  
\_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected

#### NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

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#### WEEK 4

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight  
\_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected

#### NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

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#### WEEK 5

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight  
\_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected

#### NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

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#### WEEK 6

Start Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Day of Week: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight  
\_\_\_\_\_ # of days collected

#### NOTES (WHAT WORKS, WHAT DOESN'T)

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#### Totals – Weeks 3 through 6

\_\_\_\_\_ Bag Volume \_\_\_\_\_ Weight

#### Averages – Weeks 3 through 6

Total Volume  $\div$  4 = \_\_\_\_\_ Total Weight  $\div$  4 = \_\_\_\_\_