

The Solution? Reusable cups!



Coffee Cups: An
"Environmental
Menace"

What happens to your plastic
cup after it's been tossed?

- Starbucks offers \$0.10 off your order if you bring your own cup to encourage more people to do so. Is this greenwashing??

The Problem

If you're like me, you need your daily coffee fix to feel good. But unfortunately, we're spokes in the machine of a very large issue.

25 BILLION coffee cups are used and thrown away each year in the US alone -- and most of them are not even recyclable.

The Process

We already know that plastic straws and sleeves make their way into the aquatic system. It's less known, though, that paper cups have a moisture-blocking lining made from polyethylene, and plastic cups are made from polypropylene -- both of which are not accepted in most recycling programs³. The recycling of these "contaminated" cups redirects the route of the whole mound straight to the landfill.

The Life Cycle



1. Woodchips are ground into a pulp.
2. The pulp is bleached using toxic chemicals like NaOH and chlorine. The bleached pulp is mashed into paper.
3. A plastic lining (usually polyethylene) is applied to the paper and formed into shape .
4. Heat is applied to seal the paper layer and plastic layer⁵.



1. Plastic granules are heated and thinned into a sheet.
2. The sheet is heated again and passed through metal cup-shaped moulds .
3. The plastic is heated AGAIN to be rounded and then finished⁴.

After manufacturing and use, most of these cups go straight to landfills. The ones that make it to recycling can end up contaminating entire recyclable loads!²

- **Buildup of plastic cups on marine land = biodiversity loss**
- **Bleaching, manufacturing, and the heating of plastic = releases toxic chemicals into the atmosphere**
- **Starbucks: new plastic lids use even more plastic².**

Sources

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3. Helmer, Jodi. "The Massive Environmental Impact of Your Coffee Cup." *FoodPrint*, 9 Sept. 2020, foodprint.org/blog/environmental-impact-coffee-cup/.
4. "How Plastic Cups Are Made?" *Amhil*, 2 Apr. 2020, amhil.eu/en/2020/04/02/how-plastic-cups-are-made/.
5. Sherman, Fraser. "How Are Paper Cups Manufactured?" *Sciencing*, 22 Oct. 2019, sciencing.com/how-are-paper-cups-manufactured-13652626.html.