

SPEAKERS FOR SCHOOLS GREAT BRITISH PLASTICS CHALLENGE

Helping a local business ditch plastic straws

This is a short guide on how you can encourage your local business to ditch plastic straws! Most business owners want to be more environmentally conscious but also need to think about costs and keeping customers happy. By explaining that this is a change many of their customers support, you can help make a difference to plastic waste in your community.

HOW TO DO IT

- 1) Visit a local café or restaurant who you know uses plastic straws; choose a less-busy time of the day.
- 2) Ask to speak to the manager or someone in a position of authority – but let them know you're there for a friendly chat about a school/community project and wanted to see if they could help.
- 3) Let them know you want to help them switch from plastic straws, and explain your case:
 - The UK throws away an estimated 8.5 billion straws every year! (WWF)
 - It takes 200 years for a straw to decompose and in most cases, straws cannot be recycled ☹️
- 4) They'll want to know the alternatives, so you can suggest:
 - Stop offering customers straws without their asking – Remember, straws are important for some people still need access to straws.
 - Carry paper or biodegradable straws which are now easily purchased online such as:
 - <https://www.aardvarkstraws.com/buy-here/>
 - <https://www.pearlandearl.com/collections/paper-straws>
 - <https://www.mbswholesale.co.uk/bar-supplies/drinking-straws/paper-straws/>
 - If straws isn't really possible, then why not suggest cutting down on other plastics such as plastic cups and stirrers by switching to glasses or teaspoons instead?
- 5) See if you can get them to agree to this in principle and take a photo with them or at their shop, letting people know they are going to work on this! Example:

“Great to speak to @({shop name}) today about cutting down on plastics usage, they are going to try to ditch plastic straws! #Plasticschallenge #PassOnPlastic @Speakers4Schools”
- 6) Agree a time to come back in a month or so, after the shop owner has had a chance to buy new stock to see how it's going!

FINALLY...

Part of the challenge is having the conversation in the first place—you can't expect to change everyone's mind. If you can, try multiple businesses, and try using social media and/or a letter to let them know why this is a good idea.

TOP TIPS

- 1) It's fine to call to make sure the manager is in or if you can't visit but sometimes these conversations are friendlier and easier in person.
- 2) Keep the tone friendly and helpful but let them know attitudes are changing. Many businesses just need a nudge!
- 3) Not near any shops? Write a letter to a business instead to make your request stand out (emails can get missed!).