**This Zero-Waste Superstar Keeps 4 Years of Trash in One Small Jar (Here’s How You Can Too!)**

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Lauren Singer is on a crusade for zero-waste lifestyles. Famously known for the tiny footprint she leaves in our landfills — around a 16 ounce mason jar worth of trash in four years — she’s a living example of how drastically slashing our waste really isn’t all that difficult. In fact, it can actually be fun and creative. Here’s how.

**The Aha! Moment That Changed Everything**

For Lauren, concern about the environment has always been important, to the point where she majored in Environmental Studies during college. But the real [wake-up](https://wakeup-world.com) call was during her senior year of college when her professor challenged students to *live their values*. She also began to notice that fellow environmental studies students would bring their lunches in a single-use plastic bag, complete with disposable water bottles and plastic takeout containers. She realized we all have to walk the talk of living in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner and vowed to change her own waste habits.

*“Then I learned about this family in California, calling themselves the Zero Waste Home, that was producing little to no garbage, it was this Aha! moment for me. I wanted to lessen my impact, so I started my Zero Waste journey. This is when I really decided that I not only needed to claim to love the environment, but actually live like I love the environment,” she said.*

So began Lauren’s journey of zero waste. After switching to reusable glass containers that she fills with bulk items at her local natural food market, using cloth produce bags and stainless steel water bottles, and trading plastic toothbrushes for biodegradable and compostable wood varieties, her waste footprint shrank to almost zero. She also composts all fruit and vegetable clippings — and uses washable cloth towels and napkins instead of paper. She adopted a silicone menstrual cup, along with recycled/unbleached toilet paper. What’s more, she learned to make her own eco-friendly cleaning products from bulk items like vinegar and baking soda. Switching out liquid shower soap for bulk bar soap is another step she’s taken. She provides additional creative alternatives to our throw away culture on her website [Trash Is For Tossers](http://www.trashisfortossers.com/2013/08/zero-waste-alternatives-ultimate-list.html).

To get started on your own journey, Lauren recommends the following *2 steps to zero waste*:

***Evaluate: the first step is to take a look at your daily life and ask yourself the following questions:***

* How much garbage am I currently producing and what types? Ex: food packaging- this can help you determine the places you can start reducing and looking for alternatives.
* Why am I even interested in decreasing my impact? Is it for the environment, is it to decrease toxins in my life, is it to decrease clutter, is it because I’m totally broke and want to save money? Really understand your motivators and use them as a place to start decreasing what you use.
* What do I actually use on a daily basis (what is in my daily routine) and what do I not use/need? This can help you determine the things that you can donate and reduce.
* What products do I use that I can get more sustainable alternatives to? Ex: exchanging plastic tupperware for glass or mason jars.
* The most important one straight from Yoda’s lips: How much and what do I really need to be happy? Really assess why you own and hold on to certain things, and determine if you really need that giant foam finger in the back of your closet to be happy.

***Transition: start to downsize and properly dispose of the unnecessary things:***

* Bring a reusable bag and water bottle with you everywhere!
* Get rid of the plastic. From tupperware to take away bags plastic is toxic. For items that are lightly used, donate to your local Goodwill or Salvation Army. For products that are recyclable, like plastic, do so.
* Replace these products with sustainable, long-lasting alternatives. Such as Organic cotton, stainless steel, wood, and glass. Donate your crappy college plastic kitchenware for some nice glass, stainless steel, or cast iron. It is sexy.
* Be creative. Figure out what you can use in different ways. Organic cotton napkins can also be used as a drying rack, to store leafy greens in the fridge, or to bring lunch to work. Mason jars can be used for coffee, takeout, leftovers, toothbrush holders, lotion dispensers…
* Make your home your sanctuary. For me that means having a few things that are really important to me. Most of mine were either handed down to me or obtained on craigslist. Secondhand!
* Minimize. Ask yourself, what do I not need? What do I wear every day? What did I buy last year that still has tags on it? Whatever it is, it most likely has a value of some sort. Whether it is donating to your local Goodwill or Housing Works, or selling your products at a consignment store or on Ebay, you can always get a return on your items.
* Think organic, local, and sustainable — and BUY IN BULK.

If you live in New York City, make sure to check out Lauren’s new store [Package Free](https://packagefreeshop.com/pages/locations), which not only features all the products and tools to lead a zero waste lifestyle, but also offers DIY classes like soap making, cooking, sewing and more. If you don’t live in the area, you can order through the [Package Free Shop site](https://packagefreeshop.com/).