A close-up photograph of a woman with curly hair drinking from a reusable water bottle. The bottle has a pink and white floral pattern. She is wearing a black and white striped turtleneck and a gold chain necklace. The background is blurred, showing a bright, sunny outdoor setting.

REUSE

‘HOW TO’

GUIDE

Want to save money AND help the planet out? We've got you covered. This guide is packed full of hints, tips and inspiration to lead low waste lifestyles.

SUSTAINABLE UCL
#CHANGEPOSSIBLE

Hello from Sustainable UCL and Hubbub.

This guide is part of #TheLoop campaign, a collaboration between Sustainable UCL and Hubbub to help you reduce waste and improve recycling around campus, whilst helping you to save money on the way.

At Sustainable UCL we believe that to change the future, you have to make change possible today. As UCL's Sustainability team, we work collaboratively with students, staff, and researchers to test novel sustainability ideas and challenge the status quo. Thanks to our community of eco warriors we have already divested from fossil fuels, switched to 100% electricity, and committed to zero carbon buildings and a single-use plastic-free campus by 2024. But we need your help to do more and make change possible at UCL!

At Hubbub, we design campaigns that inspire ways of living that are good for the environment. We focus on things that are relevant to people's day to day lives such as food, fashion, our homes and where we live and work. We find new and creative ways to raise awareness, encourage people to think differently about a topic and empower them to take practical everyday actions that make a difference.

Thank you for downloading the guide, we hope you find it useful.

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SECTION 01

WELCOME

WELCOME

Starting back at university is a busy time for both students and staff, old and new. Whether you're back on campus or working remotely, we hope you're settling in and are excited to kick start the term! We've *bin* busy and there are a few things we need to tell you about.

Every year the UK generates around 10 million tonnes of packaging waste and about half of this comes from households. At UCL we know that the things we use, consume and throw away have a global impact. That's why UCL sends zero waste to landfill. Our recycling rates are pretty good but we want to go further by making sure everyone at UCL recycles and stays in #TheLoop. To make our lives easier let's reduce the amount of waste we create in the first place.

Need a refresher? We've got you covered.

The contents of this guide will help you decrease your plastic use, food waste, and water and electric use. This will lower your carbon footprint, while saving you time and money!

There are loads more ways to get involved and join #TheLoop.

Head to ucl.ac.uk/sustainable/loop to download free posters and social media assets to share.

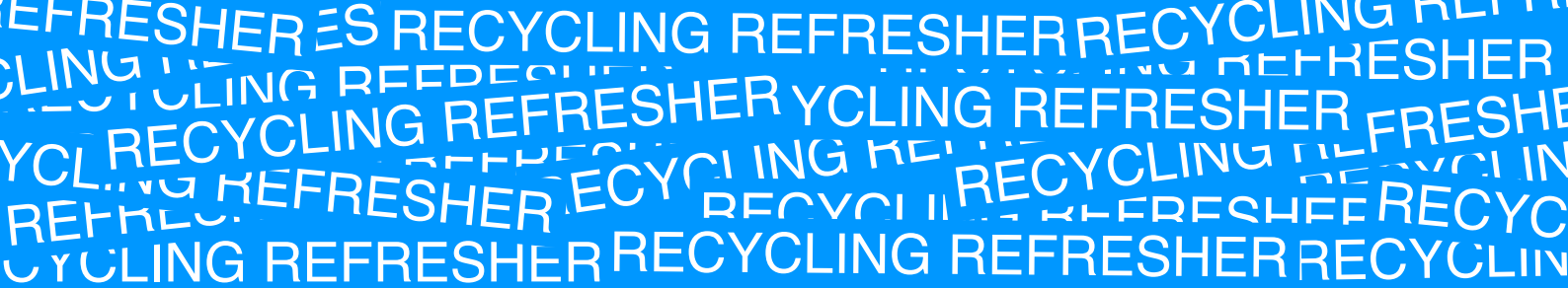
Become a sustainability ambassador.
Find out more details about the roles.

A collage of recycling materials against a light blue background. On the left, a hand holds a large, clear plastic bottle. In the center, there is a piece of yellow cardboard. On the right, a blue plastic bottle cap is visible. At the bottom, a hand holds a crushed metal can. Overlaid on these images are three text boxes: a black one at the top, a blue one in the middle, and another blue one at the bottom.

SECTION 02

RECYCLING

REFRESHER



Where does UCL's waste go?

UCL is proud to be a zero waste to landfill institution. Food waste and organic material is sent to anaerobic digestion for fuel; things made from recyclable materials are sorted for recycling in Kent, and what's left that can't be recycled is recovered for energy in Avonmouth. While energy recovery means that we can gain some energy from the incineration of the material, a combination of recycling and composting can save three to four times more energy than an incinerator can produce.

We need all students and staff to help reach our goal of 85% recycling, by producing less waste, choosing to buy items made from recyclable material and by recycling smarter.

Check before you chuck it!

The recycling system can only cope with a small amount of contamination (wrong materials/food or liquid). We want to make sure we're recycling the good stuff! If in doubt, use the black rubbish bin.



STAY IN #THELOOP

Find out where to recycle other items and what can and can't be recycled on campus here: ucl.ac.uk/sustainable/bin-signage

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a pair of glasses over a document. The hand is in the foreground, with fingers slightly curled. The glasses have a dark frame and are positioned over a light-colored document. The background is blurred, showing a dark blue or grey surface.

SECTION 03

ON THE GO

ESSENTIALS

ON THE GO ESSENTIALS

It's estimated that **40% of the plastic produced** worldwide is packaging that gets used once and then thrown away, much of it is not recyclable. To cut down on the amount you chuck away, here are five simple swaps you can easily carry around with you and reduce your waste while on campus.



1. Get yourself a reusable water bottle

Every year in the UK we use approximately 13 billion plastic bottles, and only 7.5 billion get recycled! Switching from disposable plastic bottles to a water bottle that will last will save you money when you're on the move.

Be sure to get a bottle that's BPA free so you're not drinking any nasty chemicals. Not sure where to fill up? Check out this awesome **refill app** to find out where you can refill your water bottle for free throughout the UK.



2. Coffee to go please

Currently the UK throws away 3 billion disposable coffee cups every year, and only a small percentage of these are recycled. By bringing your own, you'll prevent wasting single-use cups, as well as enjoying discounted coffee (15p off at UCL cafes) and other cafes around London!



3. Bag of tricks

The environment bagged a winner when the plastic bag charge was introduced: it led to an outstanding 85% decrease in bag use. Despite this, we can all forget to bring bags with us and this can cause a dilemma, as reusable bags are only better environmentally when we use them multiple times. Fold one up and keep it in a pocket in your bag for those forgetful moments!

10

A close-up photograph of a person's hands filling a black water bottle with a red and blue stripe at a public fountain. Water is spraying from the fountain's nozzle into the bottle. The background is blurred, showing other people and the fountain's structure.

SECTION 04

WASTE LESS

CAMPUS

WASTE LESS ON CAMPUS

Coffee cup canteen discount

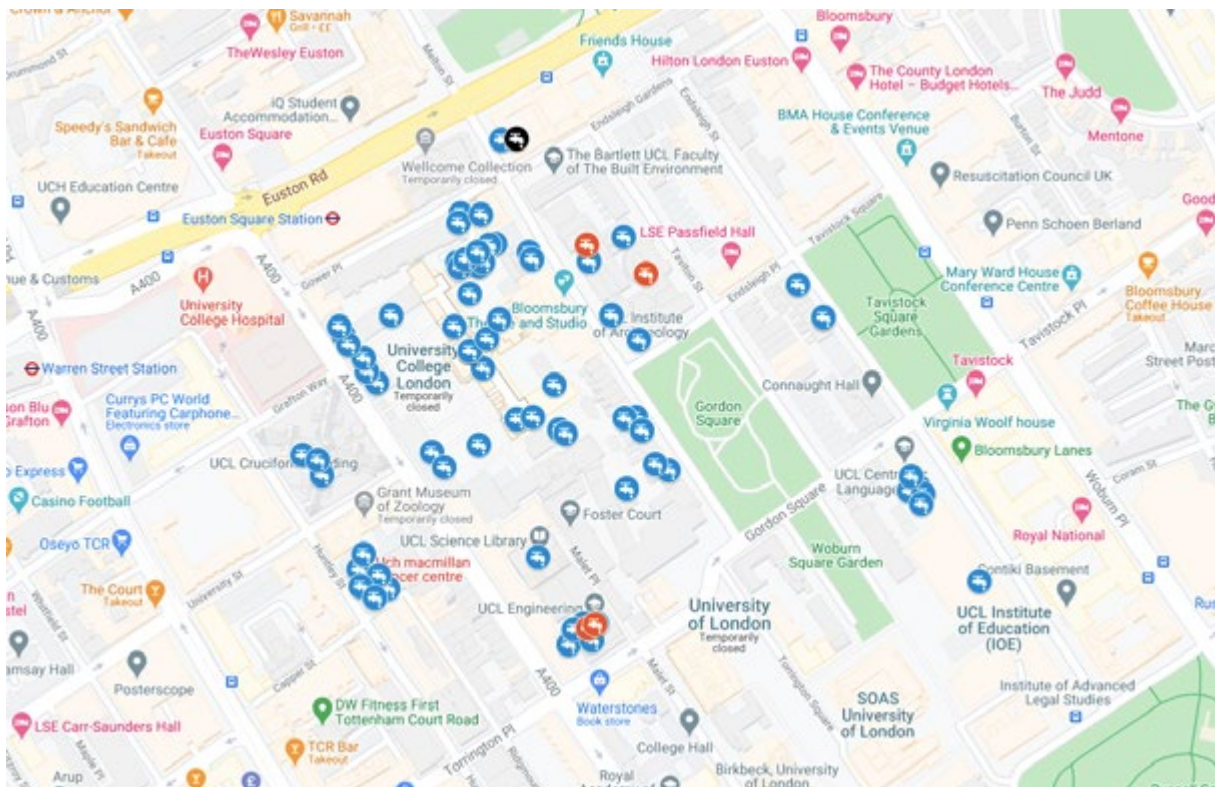
Did you know that UCL gets through 2764 coffee cups EVERY DAY?

You can bring this figure down, and the canteen offers a 15p discount every time you bring your own reusable cup: if you have one coffee every day of term time using your own cup, you can save £22.50 that year. Coffee shops around Bloomsbury generally accept reusable cups too.

Water fountains on campus

UCL has installed water fountains where you can fill up your water bottle.

[Check out the map here.](#)



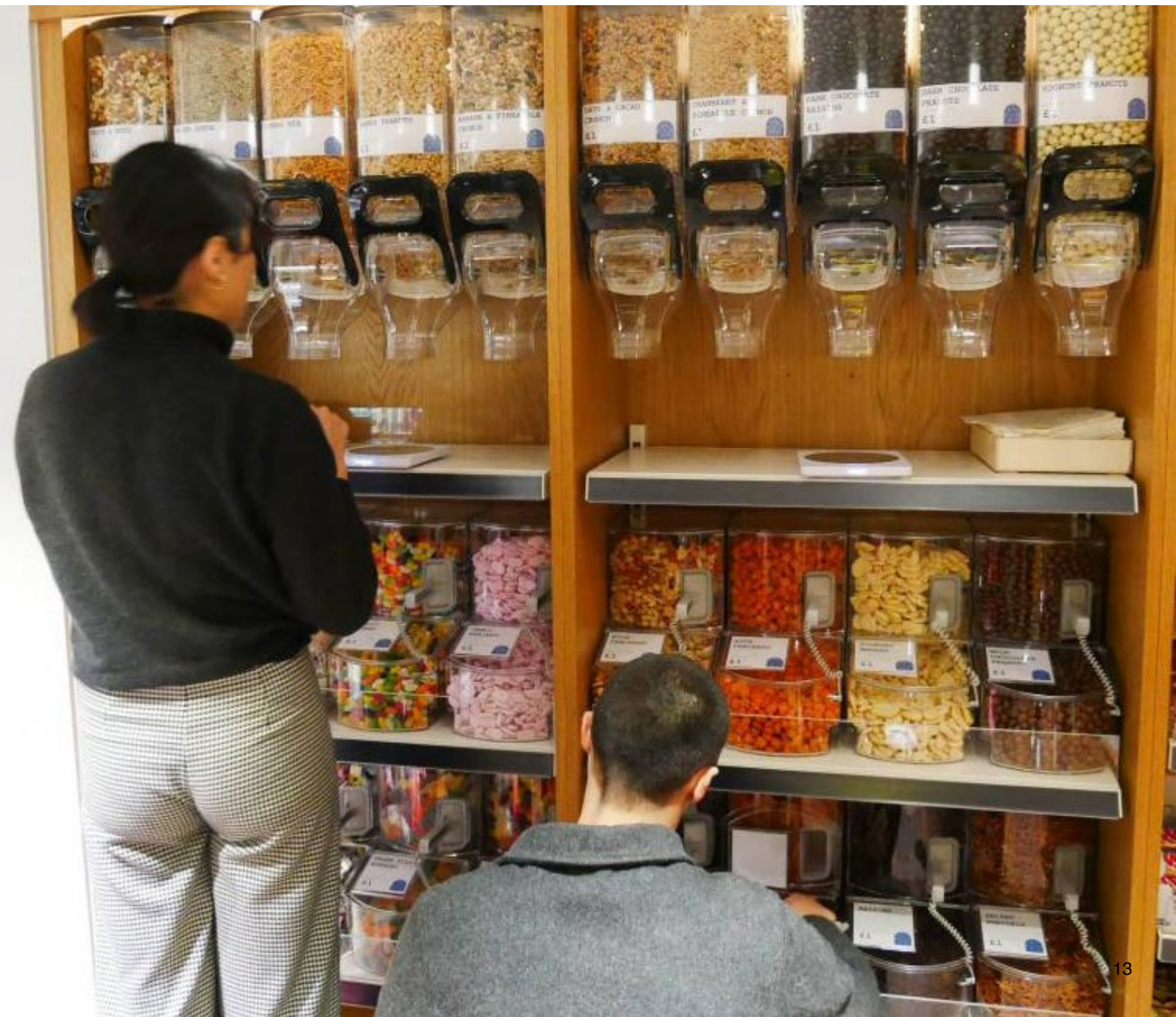
Wear a reusable face mask

If everyone in the UK used one disposable face mask every day for one year, this would create an extra 66,000 tonnes of waste, and could cover more than 57,000 football fields. Find out how to make a reusable face masks from your own choice of fabric [here](#).

WASTE LESS ON CAMPUS

UCL's Refectory shop

UCL's Refectory shop is being used as a test bed for plastic free alternative products. If you haven't seen it already, pop down with your Tupperware to buy plastic-free snacks including pick and mix nuts and fruit. All drinks are also in non-plastic, sustainable containers.





SECTION 05

FOOD

SHOPPING

SHOPPING TIPS



Ditch single-use bottles

Tap water in the UK is safe to drink! There's no need to splash out on bottles of H₂O, the tap is tip-top.



Meal planning

Think about what meals you want to make for the week ahead, and write this down in a notebook or on your phone. Try to think of what meals include similar ingredients, to ensure you don't buy and waste certain types of food.



Shopping list

Make a shopping list before you leave the house and take it with you to avoid overbuying. There are many apps which are great for this, such as Google Keep, where you can tick each item you've found as you go along. This way you won't miss anything from your list, and once you get into a routine of what you need, you can use the same tick list each time. You can also take a picture of your fridge or cupboard shelf –a 'shelfie' to remember what you already have when you go shopping.



Use a net bag or tote bag

Almost a third of plastic packaging in supermarkets is non-recyclable and difficult to recycle. Not only plastic packaging is wasted, but also fruit and vegetables sold in bulk! You can easily save your money and food waste by buying your fruit and veg loose and carrying it in a net bag.



Find a low waste shop near you:

Search on zerowastenear.me or check out our own Refectory shop!

A smiling woman with long dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt, is cooking in a kitchen. She is holding a metal spoon and stirring a pot on a stove. In the background, there is a colorful patterned cloth, a yellow vase, and a green plant hanging from above. The text "SECTION 06" is overlaid on the image in a black box with white text.

SECTION 06

FOOD

WASTE

SAVE £££ AND FOOD

Difference between 'use by' and 'best before'

It's important to follow 'use by' dates. The 'use by' date is found on perishable foods that could make us ill if we eat them after this date such as fish. 'Best before' dates refer to quality, rather than food safety and eating food after this date is unlikely to be harmful. Eggs are the only exception, which must be consumed before their 'best before' date. Though it can be hard to schedule our lives around these dates, many perishable foods can be frozen. You don't need to freeze foods on the day of purchase; they can go into the freezer at any point up to their expiry date.

Portion planning

Getting your portions right helps reduce food waste and saves you both time and money.

Here's a general guide to an average adult portion:

Beef, lamb, pork: 100g.

Chicken, fish, turkey: 140g.

Milk: One pint is generally enough for 4 bowls of cereal.

Potatoes: 5 small potatoes constitutes an average adult portion.

Rice: 75g –80g (1/4 of a mug).

Bread: In a large loaf of bread there are generally around 20 slices. This makes 10 sandwiches or toasties!

Pasta: 100g, use a spaghetti measurer if you have one.

Lentils, chickpeas, beans: 3 heaped tablespoons (80g).

For more guidance on portion planning, visit:

lovefoodhatewaste.com/portions/everyday

STORAGE TIPS

Fruit & Veg: should be kept in the drawers at the bottom of the fridge (in their original packaging or a loosely tied bag) - the exceptions are onions, potatoes, bananas and whole pineapples, which should be kept in a cool, dark place, but not the fridge.

Bananas: are best kept out of the fridge and away from other fruits. They'll stay firmer and won't ripen as quickly if you keep them in the bag they came in.

Salad: wrap salad in a loosely tied bag and keep it in the bottom drawer of your fridge.

Bread: is best kept in the original packaging, in a cupboard or bread bin - but not in the fridge! Slice and freeze your bread for a constant supply of fresh toast. Stuck with stale bread? Whizz it up to make breadcrumbs or fry to make crispy croutons.

Meat & Poultry: store raw meat and poultry in clean, sealed containers on the bottom shelf of the fridge, so they can't touch or drip onto other food. Follow any storage instructions on the label and don't eat meat after its use by date. Keep cooked meat separate from raw meat. Defrost meat and fish thoroughly before cooking, and cook until piping hot. Never re-freeze raw meat (including poultry) or fish that has been defrosted.

Cheese: keeping cheese in resealable packs, foil or a plastic tub prevents it drying out. This is particularly important in the fridge.

Fish: cover with cling film and store in the coldest part of your fridge (usually the bottom). Most fresh fish freeze really well. Always freeze in meal-size portions so you can unfreeze just what you need, and label each package with the type of fish, weight or portion size and date of packaging.

Eggs: Eggs should be kept at a constant temperature below 20°C.

Milk: Don't store milk in the fridge door as it's the warmest part of the fridge. Unopened cartons can be frozen.

Chicken: Store raw chicken separately from other food, covered and chilled on the bottom shelf of the fridge. Cooked chicken should be cooled, wrapped well and stored in the fridge away from uncooked meat or fish.

Cereals, pulses, grains: store your dry goods in glass jars or in plastic containers. This keeps them fresher for longer and makes it easier to see how much you have left.

STORAGE ESSENTIALS

Food huggers

When it comes to cooking meals, there are so many occasions where you'll only use half an onion, pepper, lemon etc. [Food covers](#) are made to fit tightly around food, preventing exposure to air, so your food lasts longer. By using a food cover, you can prevent wasting half-used food bought on your weekly-shop, and in turn, save your student budget too!

Bag clips

Just like the food covers, bag clips will become an essential in the kitchen for keeping the 'crunch in your cereal' and the 'life in your loaf'.

Get appy:

Get hold of leftovers from UCL or nearby food retailers on [Too Good To Go](#) or share your surplus food on [Olio](#).

RECIPES

- Use fewer than 10 ingredients for this Cauliflower and Chickpea curry. [See recipe.](#)
- This Mexican three bean chilli recipe serves 8, perfect for a mini-gathering or freezing for later. [See recipe.](#)
- Try this pumpkin and parmesan risotto while pumpkins are in season and cheap in October and November. [See recipe.](#)
- How about a Thai green curry made in one pot (saving washing up) and in only three steps. [See recipe.](#)
- Want a nice winter warmer as it gets colder? Cook up this fab Irish stew with spelt dumplings. [See recipe.](#)
- Hack a Mousakka with ten ingredients using this recipe. [See recipe.](#)

A photograph of bathroom essentials. In the foreground, a glass of water with condensation droplets is visible. Behind it, two wooden toothbrushes are standing upright. To the right, a jar of toothpaste with a silver lid is partially visible. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

SECTION 07

BATHROOM

ESSENTIALS

BATHROOM

An easy way to reduce plastic packaging in the bathroom is to switch from liquid shower gels, shampoos and hand wash to soap bars. Bar soap doesn't contain as high a proportion of water as shower gels or liquid soaps, so they tend to last a lot longer and are more cost effective. They also have a lower carbon footprint for transporting the product because they're lighter and have fewer chemical products.

It takes 400 years for a plastic toothbrush to decompose. A bamboo toothbrush is an easy switch away from plastic –just make sure to remove the nylon bristles before composting.

UCL provides free menstrual pads and tampons across female SU toilets as part of our [Project Period](#). All sanitary waste from the UCL campus is incinerated for energy, however, there are sustainable and waste free alternatives for periods, as one disposable pad contains as much plastic as four plastic bags! Reusable tampon applicators are great for people who don't feel comfortable using non-applicator tampons, and can be washed and used again. You can also get reusable pads which you pop in the washing machine after using. One menstrual cup can be used for ten years and save roughly £128 compared to buying disposables.



WATER

1) Wet and flushy

If your toilet has a dual flush system, meaning it has 2 buttons on the flusher, make sure you're pressing the shorter flush for when you have a wee and the bigger flush for... well anything else.

2) Report any leaks to your landlord or halls manager

A leaky loo can waste between 215-400 litres of water a day and around 5-8% of loos in the UK are leaking. That's a loo-t of water! A dripping tap can waste 15 litres a day (up to 5,500 litres over a year). If you notice any drips get them reported as soon as you can: let UCL estates know about leaky taps on campus here: ucl.ac.uk/maintenance-service-requests/.

3) Shorten your shower

Showers make up $\frac{1}{4}$ of all our water use. The optimal time to spend in the shower is around 4 minutes but on average we spend over double that! Spending more time than needed in the shower can be bad for your hair and skin.

4) Turning off the tap

A shocking 68% of people leave the tap on when brushing their teeth. If you're one of them just turn off your tap when brushing the teeth and you can save a splashing 24 litres of water per day!

5) Take this quiz and dive into personalised tips

In just 10 questions we aim to predict the type of water-user you are... don't believe us? [Try it for yourself and see how right we are.](#)



SECTION 08

NIGHTS OUT

AND FANCY

DRESS

Power your party

Recycling one aluminium can saves 8 times its own weight in CO₂, and recycling one plastic bottle saves enough energy to power a 60 watt bulb for 6 hours! Bring out the recycling bins for drinks or parties, they will clear up your cans and bottles and reduce your carbon footprint.

Be the best dressed

There are lots of costumes and fancy-dress nights, see if you can reduce the impact of your costume by making one from what you have or by swapping with friends. Watch the Sustainable [UCL webpage](#) or [Instagram](#) for upcoming clothes swaps on campus.

It's not just costumes, consider your garms too. Fast fashion - the culture of buying cheap outfits and discarding them to buy more - generates 300,000 tonnes of clothes a year, that are then heading to incineration or landfill. The good news is, there are other ways of getting a new outfit without even having to purchase anything. Over the past few years, we've seen the rise of clothes swaps and rental platforms. Check apps like Depop, Ebay, Vinted for vintage and second-hand high-street clothing.

Choose to reuse

Resuables have been given the green light for safety, and now you can even use them in pubs! Lots of places are now offering takeaway #PlasticFreePints. If you bring your own cup, glass, even an old milk carton or anything you have lying around just give it a quick rinse and you're good to go. When bars and clubs do open again, and if the venue allows it, try to bring your own reusable cup and straw.

Bin your butts

If you're a smoker make sure to dispose of your butts correctly. Cigarettes are one of the most littered items in the world, making up to one-third of litter and also contain plastic and nasty chemicals. So stub out your butts or invest in a portable ashtray.



SECTION 09

MOVING IN

AND OUT

SHAKE IT

ALL ABOUT!

Did you know in an average month in the UK, around 100,000 households will move into a new home? September normally sees a rush of students moving into new halls and rental homes too.

We're moving more often, but it never seems to get any easier! We've packed up 5 of our top tips to make moving a little savvier and more sustainable.

Box Clever

If you know you have a move coming up, start saving boxes: large vegetable delivery boxes are great! Check out Freecycle to see if anyone's giving away boxes or ask your local store or supermarket at the beginning of the day if they can keep hold of a few boxes for you before breaking them down.

If you do buy boxes, buy some heavy-duty cardboard ones that can be collapsed, stored flat and will be strong enough for your next move (and maybe the move after that!).

Sheets ahead – use your bedding!

Use your pillow cases instead of black bin bags to bundle your things up – just as easy and without the plastic. One zero waste, zero effort method is to put as many clothes as you can in the middle of a bedsheet and then tie the corners of the bedsheet up together – no boxes or suitcases needed! Then put your large bundle in car or van and unpack the other side. Don't forget to give the bedsheet a wash.

For fragile items

For delicate items that could be damaged in transit, bubble wrap has long been the solution. Unfortunately, bubble wrap is hard to recycle (many councils don't accept it and it often has to be dropped off at specific collections points at supermarkets). Clothes and socks are a low-effort alternative for bubble wrap and gets you a bit more room for packing extra clothes.

Transporting a big item like a mirror can be a nerve-shattering experience, and wrapping these with a duvet or fluffy blanket as padding can help keep it safe over the journey.

Instead of buying new bubble wrap, padded envelopes often have bubble wrap in their lining and can be reused for packing delicate items.

On the case!

Using what you already have saves you having to spend more on new boxes and bags. Heavy items like technology or books are best transported in a suitcase – they won't fall through the bottom!

Got a shelf or drawer of little items that you haven't had time to sort but still want to take with you? Keep small, easily lost items like trinkets and jewellery safe by packing them into handbags. It keeps items grouped together and from being lost or tangled up in bigger boxes.

If you have a lot of creams and beauty products lying around, try consolidate them! Put all your body creams in one tub, all the quarter bottles of shampoo into one shampoo bottle, etc., then you'll have fewer tubs and bottles to carry and lighten the load!

Have a Kondo Attitude

If you're packing up belongings and find lots of things that you don't want to take with you to your new home, [check out these guides](#) to getting rid of stuff without throwing it in the bin.

Hungry for more?

Moving house is a great time to start fresh. Use it as an opportunity to switch energy or broadband provider. Use these [handy switching engines](#) to find the best deal for your new home and for the planet.



SECTION 10

USEFUL

RESOURCES

USEFUL

RESOURCES

Recycling

Find out about tricky items to recycle if you aren't using the campus bins, and where your nearest recycling points are for electricals, clothes and glass!
www.recyclenow.com

Get a poster to put up in your own kitchen or lab:
ucl.ac.uk/sustainable/bin-signage

Shopping

Planet Organic in Torrington Place has a dedicated 'Unpackaged' section where you can buy pulses, grains and more in your own packaging:
www.planetorganic.com/stores/torrington-place-london-wc1e/

Bulk Market is a Hackney Based Zero Waste shop that offers deliveries to most London postcodes: www.bulkmarket.uk/zero-waste-delivery

Food markets

Right around the corner from Waterloo Station, find fresh street food from around the world at lower marsh market: www.lowermarshmarket.com/

London Farmer's Market run pop-up markets across the city, find them in Bloomsbury, Marylebone, Westminster Bridge for a fresh lunch or pick-me-up:
www.lfm.org.uk/

Southbank Centre Food Market offers street food, drinks, delicious coffee, tea and sweet treats, and fresh produce to take home:
www.southbankcentre.co.uk/visit/shopping/markets/scfood-market

Apps

OLIO is an app to share food that might otherwise be wasted, and can help you get hold of food for free!

UCL saved over 1000 meals from being thrown away with **Too Good To Go**, which pairs with restaurants and cafes to sell their food at a discounted price at the end of the day.

Cogo is a carbon footprint tracking app that pairs with your spending so you can get an accurate picture of your CO² based on what you buy.

Good On You is a site that lets you look into the ethics of brands.

Refill is the app that can get you hydrated quickly, by finding the nearest point that you can fill up your water bottle.

Wave-y hello to new garms that don't cost the earth on **Depop**, **Vinted** or **Ebay**.

Volunteer

Get in touch with **Sustainable UCL** to join:

- **The UCL Zero Food Waste Society** to distribute surplus food from campus to homeless shelters.
- **The UCL MODO Fashion Society** to organise and run sustainable fashion shows.
- #TheLoop campaign - **become an ambassador**.

Spot anything on campus that needs fixing?

Get in touch with UCL estates: www.ucl.ac.uk/maintenance-service-requests/.

