

# What 'Sport' Can Do Daily

Based on Plastic Game Plan for Sport: Sustainability Essentials, International Olympic Committee (IOC) & UN Environment Programme, 2020.



The document *Plastic Game Plan for Sport: Sustainability Essentials* (International Olympic Committee [IOC] & UN Environment Programme, 2020) proposes that the sports community, including organizations, clubs, coaches, athletes, event organizers, sponsors, and fans, should take coordinated action to reduce plastic use and pollution through strategic planning, behaviour change, and systemic improvements. The guide emphasizes that plastic pollution is not only an environmental issue but also directly affects sport settings such as oceans, parks, and natural training environments. Therefore, sport is positioned as both part of the problem and a powerful part of the solution, with the capacity to influence millions of people worldwide.

## 1. Core Strategic Approach: The Six Rs

The framework presented in the guide serves as the foundation for decision-making in sport and proposes a hierarchy for rethinking plastic use known as the Six Rs. These include refusing unnecessary plastic items, reducing the amount of plastic used, reusing materials wherever possible, replacing plastic with more sustainable alternatives, recycling materials effectively, and reminding, inspiring, and influencing others to take action. Importantly, the document stresses that recycling alone is insufficient to address the scale of the problem; instead, prevention and reduction should be prioritized as the most effective strategies. This approach encourages sports stakeholders to reconsider everyday practices and procurement decisions in order to minimize plastic consumption from the outset.

The central proposition is to rethink plastic use through a hierarchy:

1. **Refuse** unnecessary plastic items.
2. **Reduce** the amount of plastic used.
3. **Reuse** items wherever possible.
4. **Replace** plastic with sustainable alternatives.
5. **Recycle** materials effectively.
6. **Remind, inspire, and influence** others to act.



## WAYS TO REDUCE PLASTIC



Refuse unnecessary plastic items.



Reduce the amount of plastic used.



Reuse items wherever possible.



Replace plastic with sustainable alternatives.



Recycle materials effectively.



Remind, inspire, and influence others to act.

## 2. Create a Plastic Plan for Events and Organization

The guide proposes that sports organizations should develop formal plastic strategies that are integrated into their operational planning and management processes. Such strategies should include clear goals and policies, such as commitments to eliminate single-use plastics or significantly increase reuse and recycling rates. Organizations are encouraged to identify major sources of plastic consumption, prioritize actions based on feasibility and impact, and engage stakeholders including suppliers, sponsors, athletes, staff, and volunteers. Furthermore, sustainability requirements should be embedded into procurement procedures and contractual agreements to ensure accountability across the supply chain. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and improvement are also recommended to ensure that progress can be measured and future initiatives strengthened.

## 3. Reduce Plastic in Key Operational Areas

The guide proposes that sports organizations should develop formal plastic strategies that are integrated into their operational planning and management processes.

## Hydration and Bottles

- Install water refill stations.
- Stop selling single-use plastic bottles.
- Encourage reusable bottles or cups.

## Catering and Food Services

- Ban plastic straws and disposable serviceware.
- Use reusable or compostable alternatives.
- Provide bulk condiments instead of sachets.
- Reduce packaging with meals.

## Reusable Systems

- Introduce reusable cup schemes with deposits.
- Consider reusable plates, cutlery, and containers.

## Materials and Alternatives

- Choose recyclable or compostable materials.
- Avoid mixed-material packaging that is hard to recycle.
- Avoid PVC and harmful plastics where possible.

**PLASTIC STRATEGY FOR SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS**

**Hydration & Bottles**

- Install water refill stations.
- Stop selling single-use plastic bottles.
- Encourage reusable bottles or cups.

**Catering & Food Services**

- Ban plastic straws and disposable + serviceware.
- Use reusable or compostable alternatives.
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**Reusable Systems**

- Introduce reusable cup schemes with deposits.
- Consider reusable plates, cutlery, and containers.

**Materials & Alternatives**

- Choose recyclable or compostable materials.
- Avoid mixed-material packaging that is hard.

The infographic features a central globe icon at the top, surrounded by green leaves. It includes various icons: a water bottle with a red 'X' over it, a water tap, a coffee cup, a reusable cup with a deposit, and a recycling symbol. The background is a vibrant green and blue gradient with starburst effects.

## 4. Improve Waste Management Systems

While reducing plastic use is presented as the primary objective, the document also highlights the importance of effective waste management systems to ensure that unavoidable materials are handled responsibly. The guide stresses that recycling should not replace reduction efforts. It also proposes:

- Planning waste systems early in event design.
- Matching materials to local recycling infrastructure.
- Providing clearly labelled recycling and compost bins.
- Working with waste contractors for data and tracking.
- Ensuring materials actually get recycled.

## 5. Work with Suppliers and Sponsors

The guide emphasizes the importance of engaging suppliers and sponsors as key partners in reducing plastic use across the sports sector. Organizations should:

- Require suppliers to reduce packaging.
- Use reusable or returnable transport packaging.
- Include sustainability requirements in contracts.
- Ensure sponsors' giveaways avoid single-use plastics.
- Promote sustainable merchandise options.

## 6. Address Plastic in Infrastructure and Event Elements

Recommendations include reducing plastic in:

- Signage and branding (use reusable or recyclable materials).
- Accreditation and lanyards (reuse, avoid dates).
- Decorations, confetti, fireworks, balloons (use alternatives).
- Merchandise and fan items (avoid single-use plastic).

## 7. Communication and Education

A major proposition of the document is that behaviour change can be achieved through effective communication and education. Sports organizations are encouraged to:

- Inform athletes, spectators, and staff about policies.
- Use events to raise awareness.
- Integrate sustainability into media, signage, and programmes.
- Encourage participation and responsibility.

Sport is presented as a powerful platform for influencing society.

## 8. Role of Athletes

Athletes are identified as influential role models who can contribute to reducing plastic use both through personal behaviour and public advocacy. Athletes are encouraged to:

- Refuse single-use plastics personally.
- Use reusable products.
- Ask sponsors and organizations to act.
- Advocate publicly for change.
- Join initiatives like the Big Plastic Pledge.

Athletes are seen as influential role models for fans.

## 9. Role of Fans and Communities

Fans and local communities are also considered important actors in achieving sustainability goals within sport. Fans are encouraged to:

- Bring reusable items to events.
- Sort waste correctly.
- Choose sustainable products and services.
- Support environmentally responsible organizations.

Plastic pollution in sport can be significantly reduced through planning, behaviour change, stakeholder collaboration, and the systematic application of the Six Rs framework.





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