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IKEA 'BAG THE PLASTIC BAG'

Questions and Answers

1. How does the IKEA "BAG THE PLASTIC BAG" program work?

This program is about changing consumer behavior and reducing plastic bag waste and litter. Beginning on March 15th, IKEA will no longer offer customers free plastic bags at checkout. Customers can choose to buy a plastic bag for five cents, bring their own bag from home, use no bag, or purchase IKEA's iconic, reusable 'blue bag;' for 59 cents. The goal is to cut plastic bag use in half at IKEA, from 70 million bags per year to 35 million, or even fewer.

2. Why is IKEA charging for shopping bags when they were previously given away in their stores and still are in other retail outlets?

IKEA believes that part of caring for the environment is finding ways to do more with less. In that spirit, IKEA wants to help move customers away from using unnecessary plastic bags. People in the United States throw away about 100 billion plastic shopping bags each year¹. Some are recycled, but most never get a second use; they are simply thrown away as garbage. Changing habits is hard, but IKEA believes that by working together, we can all make a difference.

3. Why are plastic bags a problem?

Plastic bags strangle our planet. They are a stream of waste and litter our environment. And they are not fully biodegradable. Plastic bag litter is unsightly and unsanitary in our communities. When swept into the waterways, it endangers animals and contaminates our oceans. Even recycling costs money and energy, while putting disposable plastic bags into a landfill uses precious space. Plastic bags also require significant quantities of energy and resources to produce – primarily fossil fuels – as well as chemicals with the potential to harm human health.

4. How much is IKEA charging for plastic bags?

For each plastic bag requested at checkout, IKEA will charge five cents. IKEA hopes that this nickel will encourage customers to bring their own bag or use no bag at all. IKEA will not realize a profit on the sale of plastic bags; the goal is to reduce bag use, raise awareness, and encourage a change of habits. (cont'd)

¹ <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/1499>



When customers opt to purchase a disposable plastic bag for five cents, IKEA will donate that money to American Forests, the nation's oldest non-profit citizens' conservation organization. IKEA has long supported American Forests. To date, IKEA and American Forests have planted approximately 300,000 trees in the U.S., enough to offset 100,000 tons of CO₂ emission over the next 40 years.

5. Do plastic bags *really* cost that much?

Yes, it actually costs IKEA five cents to produce, ship, and handle each bag. When retailers give away free plastic bags, their costs are passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices. The annual cost to US retailers alone is estimated at \$4 billion.² Again, the purpose of this program is to change habits and build awareness. IKEA is donating all revenues from the plastic bags to American Forests, the nation's oldest non-profit citizens conservation organization, to plant trees and offset CO₂ emissions.

6. Why is IKEA selling a bigger plastic bag for 59 cents?

The goal is that one sturdy reusable bag will replace many thousands of disposable plastic bags. To help alter customer behavior and encourage environmentally responsible habits, IKEA will offer its iconic blue bag as a long-lasting and reusable alternative to the thin plastic bags likely to get thrown away after a single use. To further encourage this purchase, IKEA has dropped the price of the blue bag from 99 cents to 59 cents, our basic cost to produce. IKEA hopes customers will bring their blue bag to the store each time they shop and use it for their other shopping trips, as well.

Although the blue bag is also made of plastic (polypropylene), it replaces the many hundreds of thin-film polyethylene plastic bags over a lifetime of use. IKEA recognizes that although they cannot completely eliminate the use of plastic, they can greatly reduce the amount of plastic waste. By encouraging customers to use and reuse the blue bag, IKEA is investing in the future health of our environment.

7. Why doesn't IKEA go back to paper bags? Don't paper bags degrade?

IKEA has looked at the full life cycle of paper versus plastic. Paper is bio-degradable and can contain recycled fibers. However, one pallet of plastic bags equates to 10 pallets of paper bags. With this extra load for the same quantity of bags, extra emissions are released from trucks and the transportation process causes congestion and noise. Paper bags are also more likely to be used once and discarded. In our opinion, the best choice is a reusable bag.

8. What makes you think this program will work?

IKEA has had success with this program in the UK. The UK program, which was launched in Spring 2006, has already achieved a monumental 95 percent reduction in plastic bag use.

² <http://www.reusablebags.com/facts.php?id=2>



With the launch of this initiative, IKEA becomes one of the first U.S. retailers to charge customers for plastic bags with the goal of completely eliminating their use in IKEA stores. Of course, IKEA recognizes that Americans have different shopping habits and that bringing a reusable bag to the store will take some getting used to. However, IKEA is encouraged by the response from a small customer survey that clearly demonstrates a desire to take positive action and stop plastic bag waste.

9. What do you expect the impact of this program to be in the U.S.?

The goal at IKEA is to cut plastic bag use in half, from 70 million bags per year to 35 million, or even fewer. IKEA is committed to stopping plastic bag waste and endorsing environmentally responsible habits.

10. Are you being forced into this by the government or environmental groups?

No, this program is entirely voluntary. IKEA has chosen to take a proactive stand about an environmental problem that is solvable, calling attention to a small thing we *all* can do to make a difference. It is consistent with the IKEA mission of helping customers achieve a better every day life, and a continuation of the long tradition of caring for the environment. IKEA believes that Home is the Most Important Place in the World, and what more important home is there than our planet? This program lets IKEA customers know that IKEA is committed to continuing to be an environmentally responsible company.

11. Plastic bag reduction is fine, but what else is IKEA doing to help the environment?

IKEA has a long tradition of caring for the environment. The focus has been on such actions as designing all products with health and environment in mind; setting high standards for suppliers of IKEA products; and doing more with less. Examples include: responsible forestry practices; products that make use of waste materials such as the Gulhomen chair made of unused banana tree fibers; a commitment to meeting the world's strictest requirements for chemicals and substances in IKEA products (no matter where they are sold); and flat packaging IKEA products which helps squeeze more products onto every truck, saving on fuel and pollution.