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About Membership

Food co-ops throughout the U.S. are eligible for membership in NCGA.

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"Paper or Plastic?" NCGA Suggests Neither

This article was filed under [General](#)

Iowa City, Iowa (Jan. 14, 2008) — At the grocery store, when the check out clerk asks, “paper or plastic?,” what’s the more ecologically sound choice? Consider this: About 14 million trees are used annually to make paper bags for Americans. And, it takes 12 million barrels of oil to make a year’s worth of plastic bag. The National Co-op Grocers Association (NCGA), which represents 109 natural food co-ops across the nation suggests the choice should be: “Neither.”

“For the environmentally conscious, deciding whether to use paper or plastic at a grocery store can make you feel like you’re caught between a paper mill and a petrochemical plant,” said Robynn Shrader, chief executive officer for NCGA. “If at all possible, this environmental dilemma has a fairly easy solution – BYOB – ‘bring your own bag.’”

Shrader suggests making a small investment in reusable bags and keeping them in one’s home, car and/or office. Seek bags that are sturdy (heavy canvas is one good choice) and roomy enough to haul groceries (string cotton bags expand greatly but can also be easily tucked into a purse or backpack). Another option is bringing one’s own storage crates, which make loading and unloading groceries especially easy.

“Of course, with all the demands of life, family and work, it’s hard enough to find the time to shop for groceries, let alone remember to pack reusable bags before shopping,” Shrader added. “Still, there are some options for using the least amount of paper or plastic possible at checkout.” Among these:

- Chose whichever bag – paper or plastic – you are most likely to recycle.
- Use as few bags as necessary. If you bag your own groceries, pack each bag more fully; don’t double bag. If a store employee bags them, ask them not to double bag.
- Skip the bag altogether when you have only an item or two to carry.
- When you get the paper or plastic bag home, make sure you reuse it: for lining trash cans and diaper pails, for packing materials, composting (paper), craft projects and wrapping paper (paper).
- Take them to a nearby Goodwill or consignment shop that can reuse bags.

[About NCGA](#)

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The National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA), founded in 1999, is a business services cooperative for consumer-owned food co-ops located throughout the United States. NCGA is owned by 109 food co-ops operating more than 130 stores in 32 states with combined annual sales of over \$920 million. NCGA helps unify natural food co-ops in order to optimize operational and marketing resources, strengthen purchasing power, and ultimately offer more value to natural food co-op shoppers everywhere. For a map of co-op member locations, visit www.ncga.coop/member-stores. To learn more about NCGA, click [here](#). To learn more about co-ops visit www.gocoop.coop.

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