

# Paper or Plastic?

“Paper or Plastic?” is asked with every grocery store visit, but which is better? ILEA recommends plastic as the preferred choice, based on a Franklin Associates life-cycle study.

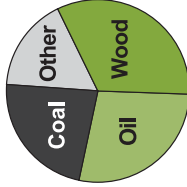
Each bag was evaluated in two ways: the energy needed to produce each type of bag and the quantity of waste. Total energy includes both *process energy*, the energy consumed through manufacturing, and *feedstock energy*, the energy embodied in a bag’s material. Paper bags use wood as feedstock; oil and coal supply process energy. Plastic bags use natural gas and oil as feedstock; natural gas, oil and coal supply process energy.

At current recycling rates, two plastic bags use 13% less total energy than one paper bag.

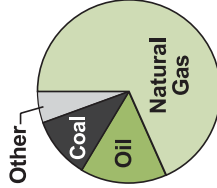
Two plastic bags produce a quarter as much solid waste, a fifteenth as much waterborne waste and half the atmospheric waste as one paper bag. Overall, two plastic bags produce 72% fewer pollutants than a single paper bag.

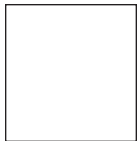
Learn more about this study by visiting ILEA’s website. Or, just avoid the question altogether by bringing a cloth bag.

## Energy in Paper



## Energy in Plastic





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