

# **BUILD** with **BAGS**

A green recycling symbol consisting of three arrows forming a triangle, positioned above the word 'BAGS' in the title.

## **BEST BAGGING PRACTICES GUIDE**



A program by Iowa Grocers to encourage  
the recycling of plastic bags

# Build with Bags Best Bagging Practices Guide

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# Introduction

*Build with Bags* is a cooperative effort of the Iowa Grocery Industry Association, Keep Iowa Beautiful, the Des Moines Area Metro Waste Authority, Iowa Department of Natural Resources and The Des Moines Register aimed at: (1) doubling the amount of plastic bags recycled over the next 24 months; (2) reducing consumption of plastic bags; (3) increasing use of reusable bags; and (4) encouraging purchases of furniture and equipment made from recycled plastic through a grant program for parks and schools.

The foundation of the *Build with Bags* program is this Best Bagging Practices Guide, which is intended to provide stores suggestions on meeting the program's goals. The suggestions offered in this guide provide Iowa grocers a real opportunity to measurably increase the recycling of plastic bags while also driving down consumption of plastic bags. We encourage you to consider these suggestions while also recognizing that your efforts should be customized to fit your unique situation.



Iowa Grocery Industry Association



The Des Moines Register



**Metro Waste Authority**  
Your Partner in Environmental Solutions



## **Goal #1: Increased Plastic Bag Recycling**

The primary goal of Build with Bags is to double the amount of plastic bags recycled in the next 24 months. Suggestions on things that can be done to support this effort are provided below.

### **Training**

#### **Checkers/Cashiers**

- Train checkers to tell your customers about your store's plastic bag recycling efforts
- When customers choose plastic bags, remind them that those bags can be recycled at the front of the store

#### **Baggers/Sackers**

- Train baggers to remind customers that plastic bags may be returned to the store for recycling

### **Operations**

#### **Advertising and Promotion**

- Consider advertising that highlights your plastic bag recycling efforts
- Ensure consistency in ads to assist customers in knowing how and where to recycle plastic bags
- Promote recycling as part of your community marketing efforts – “We care about the community”
- Locate your Build with Bags recycling container in a prominent, well-marked location at the front of the store
- Explain to customers what is being done with your recycled plastic bags
- Use recycled plastic furniture that illustrates “closing the loop” to customers
- Provide bigger, brighter, more consistent signage encouraging plastic bag recycling
- Provide economic incentives such as charging for bags, rewarding recycling or offering discounts to those who recycle
- Do public address announcements promoting plastic bag recycling
- Provide banners or signs in the parking lot and store encouraging plastic bag recycling
- Provide pamphlets educating customers on benefits of plastic bag recycling
- Promote bag recycling on your plastic bags

### **Service**

- Routinely service your Build with Bags recycling bins
- Ensure recycling bins remain in good condition in a highly visible location at the front of your store
- Maintain the area around the BWB recycling container

### **Measurement**

- Measure the number of pounds of plastic recycled on a weekly or monthly basis
- Set goals for the amount of plastic bags recycled
- Display charts or graphs indicating store progress in recycling plastic bags
- Report results of your efforts to your customers and the IGIA

## **Goal #2: Decreased Plastic Bag Use**

Decreasing plastic bag consumption will save you money and also save natural resources. Simple suggestions on things that can be done to decrease plastic bag consumption are provided below.

### **Training**

#### **Checkers/Cashiers**

- Train checkers to work with baggers in preventing unnecessary plastic bag use
- Have checkers ask customers if they would prefer to use reusable bags

#### **Baggers/Sackers**

- Ensure bagger training emphasizes both the economic and environmental benefits of the effort
- Train baggers on proper bagging techniques (e.g. like items together, heavy items on the bottom, building bag walls, using the smallest bag necessary, etc.)
- Consider using a bagger training video (if not already using such a tool)
- Emphasize increasing the items per bag count and reducing unnecessary double-bagging
- Train baggers (and checkers) to ask customers if they would mind you filling the bags

## **Operations**

### **Advertising and Promotion**

- Provide posters or handouts at checkout stands highlighting your efforts to reduce plastic bag use
- Display posters indicating your attempts to reduce unnecessary plastic bag use

### **Service**

- Use devices or methods that help increase items per bag count

### **Measurement**

- Develop a system to track and report your monthly consumption of plastic bags as a function of sales
- Use measurements to help your store team achieve your stated goals of plastic bag-use reduction
- Report results of your efforts to your customers and the IGIA

## **Goal #3: Increased Reusable Bag Use**

While reusable bags are not a perfect solution to addressing the environmental impact of shopping bags, they can be a step in the right direction. The following suggestions are offered to increase both the sales and use of reusable bags.

## **Training**

### **Checkers/Cashiers**

- Train checkers to offer reusable bags in addition to the traditional offer of paper and plastic bags
- Train checkers to look for problems with reusable bags, including stains that could result in cross-contamination or food safety issues

### **Baggers/Sackers**

- Train baggers in the effective and efficient bagging of reusable bags
- Ensure baggers reflect an enthusiastic attitude towards the use of reusable bags
- Train baggers (and checkers) to thank customers for using reusable bags

## Operations

### Advertising and Promotion

- Encourage use of reusable bags in advertisements
- Do promotions with local schools or charities
- Provide economic incentives for customers to use reusable bags (e.g., discounts, rebates, etc.)
- Provide reminders for customers to bring their reusable bags into the store (parking lot signage, windshield elings, etc.)
- Prominently display reusable bags at checkout stands and on end-caps
- Provide public address announcements encouraging use of reusable bags
- Provide containers for consumers to keep their reusable bags in their vehicles
- Develop a catchy name for your reusable bags, or a “collectible” series of reusable bags
- Educate customers on advantages of reusable bags (e.g. ease of use, durability, storage)

### Service

- Make sure baggers and check-out clerks are well trained and supportive of the use of reusable bags
- Ensure displays of reusable bags are highly visible and well-stocked

### Measurement

- Develop a system to track the use of reusable bags
- Set goals to increase reusable bag sales
- Report results of your efforts to promote the use of reusable bags with your customers and the IGIA

**For more information on Build with Bags or to gain access to program news and updates, please visit:**

[www.itseasytorecycle.org](http://www.itseasytorecycle.org)

[www.iowagrocers.com](http://www.iowagrocers.com)



Iowa Grocery Industry Association



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