

Plastic, people and policy: lesson 2 of 3

Policy tools that work

Which rules actually reduce plastic?



Students at a clean-up. Photo: MCP



Five policy tools

Governments have tried many ways to cut plastic waste. Some have strong evidence behind them.

Bag charges

England's charge cut single-use bags at its main supermarkets by over 98%, from 7.6 billion in 2014 to 133 million in 2022 to 2023.

Deposit return

Shoppers pay a small deposit on a bottle and get it back when they return it. Germany's system reached a 98% return rate in 2024.

Extended producer responsibility

Makes companies responsible for recovering their packaging. The Philippine EPR Act requires big companies to recover 20% in 2023, rising to 80% by 2028.

Bans

Many LGUs ban single-use plastic bags, straws or styrofoam.

Refill and reuse

Refill stations and reusable containers cut packaging at the source.



Evidence: a small charge, a big change

**7.6
billion**

single-use bags from
England's main
supermarkets in 2014

**133
million**

in 2022 to 2023, after a
charge

140 to 2

bags per person per year



Evidence: paying people to return bottles

98%

of deposit bottles returned in Germany in 2024

A deposit gives every bottle a value, so people return them, or others collect them.



Design an ordinance

1. Your group is a municipal council. Choose one plastic problem in your town.
2. Pick one or two tools from the cards.
3. Write the ordinance: what is banned, charged or required, who enforces it, and the penalties.
4. Predict one unintended consequence, and how you would handle it.



Talk about it

Why did the bag charge work so well?

Would a deposit system work in your town? What would it need?

Which tool is hardest to enforce? Why?

Next time: the global treaty



Photos and sources

Photos: students by MCP. All illustrations drawn for this lesson by Marine Conservation Philippines.

Sources:

- GOV.UK (2023). Plastic bag use falls by more than 98% after charge introduction.
- Reloop (2024). Global Deposit Book, via Queensland Parliament submission.
- Republic Act 11898 (2022).

Full links are in the teacher reading. Free to use and share for education. Made by Marine Conservation Philippines. More free lessons: marineconservationphilippines.org/resources/teachers-resources/

