

# Real Talk: There Is No Excuse for You to Casually Drink Bottled Water

Put down the plastic. It's past time to stop.



The U.S. is buying more bottled water than ever. It's time (for most people) to stop.

BY ALEX LAUER / MAY 15, 2019 3:06 PM

I'm going to ask for two favors. First, think about the last time you drank bottled water.

Were you drinking Smartwater to quench your thirst on a run (or on the red carpet) à la Jennifer Aniston? Are you subliminally drinking Fiji after the Golden Globes or have you hopped on the alkaline trend? Or are you like my coworker across the hall who 10 minutes ago walked into our office kitchen past the cupboard with glasses, past the water filtration system and to the refrigerator and grabbed a bottle of Poland Spring? Whatever it was, think about that bottle of water.

The second favor: Make that the last one you ever drink. At least, make it the last bottled water you drink *casually*. Because for a lot of people, there is absolutely no excuse to drink water out of single-use plastic bottles on a regular basis.

Let me head off anyone preparing to unleash a rhetorical Drogon on me: to those in Flint, Michigan or who live in other communities with contaminated water, or to whom bottled water is a necessity born out of some other dire situation, *I am not talking to you*.

I'm talking to the people with filtered water refill stations in their office kitchens who, instead of bringing their own reusable water bottle, choose to pillage the cases of Nestlé Pure Life stocked in the refrigerator. I'm talking to the office managers who stock it in the first place. I'm talking to every celebrity shilling for fashionable water brands (including you, Virgil Abloh, the reusable bottle doesn't change the fact that you're working for Evian). I'm talking to people who have the ability to drink clean tap water, whether at home or out and about, and choose to instead drink from single-serve plastic that's currently polluting our planet from sea to shining sea.

**I'd like everyone reading this to collectively awake from the biggest marketing con of our time.**

Did you know that every time you drink those 17 ounces of water and the plastic bottle goes in the trash, it will stay on the planet around 450 years? Of course you do, we've been told this over and over again.

Oh, what's that? You make sure to recycle every single time? Well, if you've been paying attention, we really can't count on recycling to save us. It makes you feel better, sure, but in the words of Inigo Montoya, I don't think recycling means what you think it means. What if, instead, you just didn't use plastic water bottles at all?

Is there a point that I'm getting to? Yes, I stated it in the third paragraph, but I'll rephrase it: I'd like everyone reading this to collectively awake from the biggest marketing con of our time. (Admittedly, I cribbed that line from novelist and journalist Mohammed Hanif in the *New York Times*, who recently wrote about the Pakistani water crisis and how "the array of bottled waters available on the market is a testament to the fact that humans can be conned into buying anything." Did I mention you've been conned?)

Maybe the reason you can blithely drink bottled water without going into a full-blown existential crisis is because you think we're drinking less of it than at other times in the past. Reusable straws and plastic bag bans are in the news, right? So wouldn't that logically mean people as a whole must be consuming less bottled water? No. We're consuming much, much more.

In fact, the impetus for writing this screed, apart from my Hexxus-esque coworkers, was coming across the stats from the beverage industry in 2018. According to B2B publication BeverageDaily, bottled water dominated. It was the leading beverage category in the U.S. in both revenue and volume (around 14 billion gallons) and is "likely to see more growth in the next few years." So all that talk about eco-friendliness and using less plastic? It's certainly not happening here.

Look, I'm not here to sell you anything, not even a reusable water bottle. Chances are you've got one! So for the love of that sweet phone-retrieving beluga whale, just use it already. You've got a branded S'well bottle from some random event, so just slap a sticker over the corporate logo. Or maybe you've got a Nalgene sitting in a gym bag you haven't used in a month, so break it out. Or ask your friends. Or email me, I'm looking at a spare one on my desk as I type this (next to the one I fill up at said office kitchen refill station).

I'll admit, the enormity of the problems currently facing humanity can easily lead to inaction. The most obvious of these are climate change and pollution. But even if you break up that fundamental catastrophe into smaller pieces, they're still too big for most people to comprehend, and consequently too big for most people to do anything about. So today, just do one teeny tiny thing. Just stop drinking bottled water when you don't need to.

For a lot of people, cutting plastic bottles of water out of your life is one of the simplest actions you can take to stop polluting the planet.

Can you really not do the simplest thing?

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