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# Ending the Misrepresentation of "Single-Use Plastic" to Stop Wasteful Behaviour

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## Abstract

Every time someone writes or utters the phrase "single-use plastic" in regards to plastic bottles, bags, utensils, cups and plates, they are reinforcing the idea that these items are one time use only. However these items are not single-use. They can be washed and reused over and over again. Referring to them as "single-use" is not only deceptive but it is encouraging wasteful thinking which leads to wasteful behaviour such as throwing out plastic items after one use. Conversely items that really are one-time use only, are rarely referred to as being single-use nor are they the focus of reduction campaigns. These include laundry and dishwashing pods, laundry detergent sheets, coffee pods, air soft pellets, water balloons and more. BEACH has found from pre-tests with all incoming interns, volunteers and research assistants, that there is a lack of understanding of what "single-use plastic" is. Over the course of their time with BEACH, they receive training in the form of educational presentations, activities and discussions about plastic. At the end of the training they take a post-test. Results from the pre and post-tests will be shared. This presentation will explore "single-use plastic" from the likely origin of the phrase to the widespread misuse today by industry, the community, the media, social media, non-profits, governments and "green" type businesses. It is so important to use correct terminology and definitions when speaking and writing about plastic because words not only communicate meaning, but also influence how people think about plastic, which in turn directs what actions they take or don't take to minimize plastic usage and waste. Recent legislation passed in Hawaii will be used as an example of how it was necessary to use correct terminology and definitions in the original bill in order to ensure that the law was successful.

**Keywords:** single use, plastic, disposable, reusable, plastic bags, bottles, utensils, cups, pods, laundry detergent sheets, PVA, polyvinyl alcohol, legislation

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