



# EVERY LITTER BIT MATTERS

## TOOLKIT



Hi there!

We want to talk trash – specifically, the millions of pieces of litter that malign our roadways, sidewalks, parks, streams, and fields.

Only 3% of Pennsylvanians think littering is acceptable. Yet, we all see litter every time we leave our houses. Litter is ugly, it pollutes our environment, it harms wildlife, and it is costly to pick up.

It's time for PA to Fight Dirty and put a stop to littering.

Removing millions of pieces of litter seems like a daunting task, so we're trying to stop the problem at its source by calling upon all Pennsylvanians to do their part to ensure every piece of their garbage is disposed of properly instead of becoming litter.

Despite 97% of Pennsylvanians thinking littering is not OK, 40 to 50% of Pennsylvanians litter. This disconnect is because these Pennsylvanians do not understand that their actions are littering, such as when they leave their trash on the ground next to a full garbage can, or they think that their litter, like a dropped candy wrapper, is too small to count.

Litter pieces 4 inches or less in size add up to more than 85% of all litter. So, we're calling on Pennsylvanians to Fight Dirty by remembering Every Litter Bit Matters.

- Every Litter Bit Matters, so stash that gum wrapper in your pocket until you come to a trash can.
- Every Litter Bit Matters, so walk a few extra steps to another trash can when the closest one is overflowing.
- Every Litter Bit Matters, so dispose of that cigarette butt properly instead of tossing it on the ground.
- Every Litter Bit Matters, so don't ignore that straw paper that blew out of your hand on a windy day.

In this toolkit, you'll find everything you need to share this campaign. We're hoping that with your partnership, we can help Pennsylvanians Fight Dirty by ensuring every Every Litter Bit of their garbage is properly disposed of.

Sincerely,  
Your Friends at...



# CONTENTS

Key Messages .....	1
Key Facts .....	2
Get Involved .....	3
Key Links .....	4
Social Media .....	5

# KEY MESSAGES

## **Little litter is a big problem for Pennsylvania, but Pennsylvanians are fighting back.**

Small pieces of litter might seem insignificant, but they make up the vast majority of the litter found in public spaces around Pennsylvania. Research shows that small litter adds up by attracting more litter, not to mention it can be toxic over time, and it costs PA millions each year to clean up.

We're calling on Pennsylvanians to "Fight Dirty" by keeping our state free from litter and ensuring every piece of waste – no matter how small – is disposed of properly.

There are four easy-to-remember facts about litter that can help Pennsylvania fight back against litter:

- (1) Small pieces of litter make up most of our litter
- (2) Litter is proven to attract more litter,
- (3) Some litter, like cigarette butts are toxic, and
- (4) Litter costs Pennsylvania around \$350 million every year.

**Every litter bit matters.** Little litter is a big problem for Pennsylvania. In fact, 85% of the litter along PA roadways is four inches or less. Toss your trash—no matter how small—into a garbage can. Not on our roads.

**Litter attracts litter.** Research shows that when an individual sees litter, they're more likely to toss a can, candy wrapper, or cigarette butt in the same place. Take care of your trash before it attracts more.

**Cigarette butts are toxic.** They may seem small and harmless, but cigarette butts are filled with dangerous chemicals which are toxic to wildlife and humans. They account for one-third of all litter and can take up to ten years to decompose. Stash them until you can trash them.

**Litter costs us all.** Each year, Pennsylvania spends \$350 million to combat thousands of pounds of litter. Those funds could be used for road repairs, transportation, and safety improvements. Instead, they're thrown away on cleaning up trash.

# KEY FACTS

## Impact

- More than 90% of Pennsylvanians agree litter is a problem in our commonwealth.
- Litter begets more litter. People are more likely to litter where there is already litter, so it's important to keep our roads, sidewalks, trails, fields, and streams tidy.
- Litter prevention, education, abatement, and enforcement costs the nine largest cities in PA around \$68.5 million annually – extrapolated to an estimated more than \$350 million statewide.
- Litter negatively harms the quality of life, the natural environment, and economic development in communities across Pennsylvania.
- Litter reduces property values and causes people and businesses to relocate.

## Volume

- 502.5 million pieces of litter are on Pennsylvania's roadways – that's more than 1,000 pieces of trash per mile.
  - More than 85% of litter is less than 4 inches in size. This "little litter" includes:
    - More than 186 million cigarette butts
    - Nearly 153 million pieces of plastic
    - More than 40 million beverage containers and fast-food products
- Motorists contribute 59% of all litter.
- Most litter (about 35%) is on local roads, but littering is prevalent on all types of roads.
- Litter disproportionally affects communities dealing with issues of poverty and communities of color.
- There is twice as much litter from alcoholic beverage containers as from non-alcoholic.

## Causes

- While only 3 percent of Pennsylvanians say littering is OK, about 40 to 50 percent of Pennsylvanians litter.
- Most litter does not come from "litterbugs," but rather situational litterers who either do not realize they are littering or think the item they are littering is too small to matter.
- Situational littering can include:
  - Putting your trash on the ground next to an overflowing garbage can.
  - Leaving your food and drink containers behind when you leave a stadium.
  - Flicking a cigarette butt onto the ground instead of disposing it in a proper container because you think it's biodegradable.
  - Improperly disposing of items like alcohol bottles or candy wrappers to hide them from others, also known as "shame concealment."
  - Accidentally letting debris fall out of the back of a pickup truck.
  - Leaving vehicle debris behind after an accident.
  - Letting your trash roll out of your car or blow out of your hand, even if the item is small.
- Adults younger than 35 are twice as likely as those 35 to 49 and three times more likely than 50+ to litter. Those under 19 are most likely to litter.

# GET INVOLVED

**Fighting dirty doesn't have to take a lot of work. We can all do our part to tackle the big problem of litter with small, simple actions. These tips can help you make little changes in your life to reduce litter in your community. Share these tips with friends, family and community members to further the impact and help PA Fight Dirty.**

## 11 Ways to be Anti-Litter

1. Keep a reusable bag in your car to stash trash like food wrappers until you get home, stop at a gas station, or pass a garbage can.
2. Stop trash at its source by living the reduce-reuse-recycle lifestyle. Ask for less packaging, shun single-use plastics, make items last for as long as possible and buy used whenever possible. If you must buy, [recycle right](#)! Check the website of your municipality to find out what items you can and can't recycle.
3. Cover your trash and recycling bins when you take them to the curb. If you sweep the sidewalk in front of your home, bag any trash and put it in a trash can instead of sweeping it into the street.
4. Cover items being transported in a truck bed. Uncovered trucks are one of the top three sources of litter in [PA](#).
5. Follow the [Leave No Trace](#) code in Pennsylvania's parks and forests. It's a small price to pay for our beautiful—and free—parks.
6. If you are a smoker, keep a container in your car and pocket for cigarette butts. Cigarette butts contain plastic, leach nicotine and heavy metals and take about 10 years to break down.
7. Report illegal dump sites. Use [the online form](#) from Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, which is easy and confidential.
8. Check out PA's [Litter Action Plan](#) for many things that can prevent littering. Then call your representatives or your favorite local business to ask what they're doing to prevent litter and how you can join in.
9. Join a local volunteer litter cleanup event through [Pick Up Pennsylvania](#). Free supplies are provided for PUP events March 1 to May 31 and Sept. 1 to Nov. 30.
10. [Adopt a highway](#). It's easy to apply, and PennDOT provides supplies.
11. If you're a teacher, school administrator, or parent, start a [Litter Free School Zone](#) program to get students in the habit of taking care of their trash.

# KEY LINKS

**Want to join a volunteer litter pick-up event? Curious about the top items that make up PA's litter? Interested in Adopting a Highway? Here's a few anti-litter resources from PA and its partners.**

- [E-Newsletter Sign-Up](#)
- [PennDOT Roadside Beautification – Adopt a Highway](#)
- [Pennsylvania's Litter Action Plan](#)
- [DEP: Changing Pennsylvania's Littering Behavior](#)
- [Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful](#)
- [Pennsylvania's Litter Laws](#)
- [2019 Pennsylvania Litter Research Study Results](#)



**The PA Fights Dirty logo and additional graphics are available for use for free if you would like to use it to create swag (T-shirts, water bottles, reusable bags, etc.)**

- [Download PA Fights Dirty Graphics](#)
- [Download the PA Fights Dirty Logo Guidelines](#)





# SOCIAL MEDIA

**Help PA Fight Dirty by sharing anti-litter information on your social media channels using our graphics, videos, and sample posts as a guide.**

When you post, don't forget to use the following hashtags to join the conversation!

- #PAFightsDirty
- #EveryLitterBitMattersInPA

The example posts below show a sample of the graphics currently available with suggested text for your posts.

Graphic	Sample Text
	<b>Every litter bit matters.</b> Little litter is a big problem for Pennsylvania. In fact, 85% of the litter along PA roadways is four inches or less. Toss your trash—no matter how small—into a garbage can. Not on our roads.
	<b>Litter attracts litter.</b> Research shows that when an individual sees litter, they're more likely to toss their trash in the same place. Take care of your trash before it attracts more.
	<b>Cigarette butts are toxic.</b> They may seem small and harmless, but cigarette butts are filled with dangerous chemicals that harm wildlife and people. They account for one-third of all litter and can take up to 10 years to decompose. Stash them, don't trash them.
	<b>Litter costs us all.</b> Each year, Pennsylvania spends \$350 million to combat thousands of pounds of litter. Those funds could be used for road repairs, transportation, and safety improvements. Instead, they're thrown away on cleaning up trash.