



Back-to-School Guide to

CHEJ **PVC-Free** School Supplies



Keep the **poison plastic** off your back-to-school shopping list!

The Center for Health, Environment & Justice (CHEJ) has created this **Back-to-School Guide to PVC-Free School Supplies** to empower you to make smarter, healthier shopping choices for a toxic-free future. This guide lists the most common back-to-school supplies made out of polyvinyl chloride (PVC or vinyl) plastic and suggests safer PVC-free alternatives.



Why Shop for **PVC-Free** School Supplies?

Very important will be on the test!!!

Many children's school supplies, such as lunchboxes, backpacks and binders, are often made out of PVC—an unnecessary toxic plastic that is dangerous to our health and the environment across its lifecycle: from production, to use, to disposal. Cancer causing chemicals that contaminate the air and water of surrounding communities are used to produce PVC. When PVC is manufactured or burned, numerous dioxins are formed and released. Dioxins are a highly toxic group of chemicals that can cause cancer, and harm the immune and reproductive systems. These and other toxic chemicals released during the PVC lifecycle contaminate our bodies and may pose irreversible life-long health threats.

PVC is unique among plastics because it contains dangerous chemical additives. These harmful chemicals include phthalates, lead, cadmium, and/or organotins, which can be toxic to your child's health. What's worse is the danger these chemicals pose- phthalates and other toxic additives can leach out or evaporate into the air over time posing unnecessary dangers to children. Over 90% of all phthalates are used to soften or plasticize PVC products. **Children are at risk from even small exposures to these toxic chemicals. That's why it's important to purchase PVC-free school supplies.**

Mentoring a Movement,
Empowering People,
Preventing Harm



How to Identify PVC, the Poison Plastic

The key to avoiding PVC products is recognizing them and knowing how to find safer alternatives.

- PVC products are often labeled with the words “vinyl” on the packaging, such as vinyl 3-ring binders
- PVC packaging can be identified by looking for the number “3” inside, or the letters “V” or “PVC” underneath, the universal recycling symbol, indicating the product is made out of PVC. Just remember – bad news comes in #3’s, don’t buy PVC
- Some products are not properly labeled, making it tough to determine whether they contain PVC. If you’re uncertain, e-mail or call the 1-800 number of the manufacturer or retailer and ask what type of plastic their product is made of. You have a right to know.



★ ★ ★ Where Does Your Child's PVC Backpack and Lunchbox Come From?

Mossville, Louisiana is a historic African American community, founded in the late 1700's, that's the vinyl manufacturing capital of America. The area is home to more PVC chemical plants than anywhere else in the country. Communities like Mossville, LA, where PVC is manufactured, is where the chemicals used to make PVC lunchboxes, backpacks and other school supplies are created – exposing the community and workers to highly toxic chemicals.

A US EPA study in 1999 found levels of the cancer-causing chemical vinyl chloride (one of the key chemicals used to make PVC) in the air greater than 100 times the state air quality standard. As a result of exposure to pollution, residents suffer from elevated rates of disease.

The federal government found alarming results- community members had more than three times the national average of dioxins in their blood, elevated dioxins in breast milk, and high cancer mortality rates. A university study found residents were two to three times more likely to suffer from health problems, including a high incidence of ear, nose and throat illnesses, central nervous system disturbances, and cardiovascular problems, as well as increased skin, digestive, immune and endocrine disorders.

Next time you pick up that PVC backpack or PVC school supply, think about communities such as Mossville, Louisiana where these products are created.

Quick Tips for Avoiding PVC School Supplies

Here are some quick tips for avoiding PVC in common back-to-school products. These tips are not perfect – but they will help you embark down the road towards using safer PVC-free school supplies. See the PVC-Free Products and Suppliers section for a more detailed listing of companies that manufacture or sell PVC-free school supplies.

Look for non-plastic products whenever available. When choosing plastic items, be sure to not only

avoid PVC but also polycarbonate (PC), polystyrene (PS) and acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) plastics (see the Other Toxic Plastics to Avoid section). Avoid the three-arrow “recycling” symbol with the number 3 and/or the initials PVC; indicating it's made with PVC. If no symbol is present, call the manufacturer's question/comment line (usually a toll-free 800 number) listed on the package to find out what it's made of.

Art Supplies

- Avoid modeling clays made of PVC (polymer clays such as Fimo and Sculpey). Polymer clays are often loaded with phthalates. Look for clays made without PVC and phthalates, or make your own (recipes are available online such as at <http://www.theholidayzone.com/recipes/dough.html>).

Backpacks

- Avoid backpacks with shiny plastic designs as they often contain PVC and may contain lead.

Clothing and Accessories

- Look for PVC-free materials in rainwear (i.e. rain boots and raincoats), prints on clothing, and accessories such as handbags, jewelry and belts.
- In purchasing accessories like purses and jewelry, look for fabrics and other materials rather than plastics. Choices include jacquards, velvets, crinkled crepes, satins, wood, metals, pearls, rhinestones, etc.

Electronics

- Avoid electronics manufacturers who have not committed to phasing out PVC and other toxic chemicals in their production. For a list of companies that are going PVC-free, consult the latest edition of Greenpeace's Greener Electronics Guide that can be found that can be found at <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/campaigns/toxics/hi-tech-highly-toxic>
- Buy electronics from companies who have pledged to responsibly "take it back" at the end of its useful life.

Food Wrap

- Use PVC-free butcher paper, waxed paper, parchment paper, low density polyethylene (LDPE) or cellulose bags.
- Ask the manager of your grocery store to stock PVC-free food wrap for meats and cheeses in the deli.

Lunchboxes

- Use cloth lunch bags or metal lunchboxes. Many lunch boxes are made of PVC, or coated with PVC on the inside.

Notebooks

- Avoid notebooks containing metal spirals encased in colored plastic. The colored plastic coating on the metal spirals usually contains PVC. Select notebooks with uncovered metal spirals to avoid PVC.

Organizers and address books

- Choose organizers/ address books made with sustainably harvested wood, metal, or paper covers. Avoid those made of plastic – these sometimes contain PVC.

Packaging of School Supplies

- Avoid single-use disposable packaging whenever possible.
- Avoid the three-arrow "recycling" symbol with the number 3 and/or the initials PVC; indicating it's made with PVC. If no symbol is present, call the manufacturer's question/comment line (usually a toll-free 800 number) listed on the package to find out what it's made of.
- Avoid products packaged in unlabeled plastics, such as clamshells and blister packs, which may contain PVC.
- Choose products with packaging made from more easily recycled materials like paper (look for those with higher post-consumer recycled content), paperboard, and glass.

Paperclips

- Stick to the plain metal paperclips. Colored paper clips are coated with PVC.

Three-Ring Binders

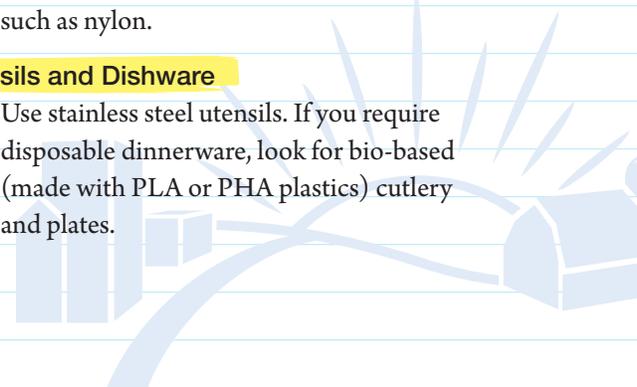
- Use cardboard, fabric-covered, or polypropylene binders. Most 3-ring binders are made of PVC

Umbrellas

- Avoid shiny and colorful plastic umbrellas as these are typically made out of PVC. Look for those made out of other materials such as nylon.

Utensils and Dishware

- Use stainless steel utensils. If you require disposable dinnerware, look for bio-based (made with PLA or PHA plastics) cutlery and plates.



- Use glass or stainless steel drinking containers. If you require plastic, avoid PVC, polystyrene (PS) and polycarbonate (PC) plastics.
- Never microwave with plastics. Use glass, stoneware, or ceramic dishware and

containers instead. Heating plastic increases the chances of chemical additives such as bisphenol A, phthalates or other additives leaching into food and beverages.

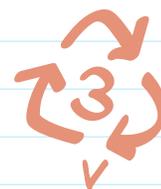
PVC-Free Products and Suppliers

To help you find PVC-free school supplies, we've compiled this spreadsheet of companies that offer PVC-free products and where to find them.

This list is a starting point – it is not intended to list every single PVC-free product or manufacturer. Use it as a guide to build your own PVC-free shopping list. It will help you find safer PVC-free school supplies.

A number of these companies also sell school supplies made out of PVC, so be sure to pay attention to the specific PVC-free product names listed herein.

This guide was released in August 2009 and changes to the products listed may have occurred since publication.



Category

School Supply	Retailer or Manufacturer	PVC-Free Products and Alternative Materials	More Information
Binders	Avery	Certain Avery products are PVC-free: "Heavy-Duty" Binder line, Aluminum Binders, Round Ring Poly Binder, Translucent Active Reference Binder	www.avery.com (available at most national chains including Staples, CVS, and Target)
	Fleurville	Re-Run Beta Binder	www.fleurville.com
	Green Vision	HDPE plastic (recycled) used for covers. Green Vision is a PVC-free source for most all common school supplies. See below ("notebooks") for more information	www.greenvision4biz.com (see above "Notebooks" for more info)
	ReBinder	Various sizes. Recycled corrugated cardboard. Can be purchased on several websites	www.greenhome.com
	The Green Office	Aurora Products Elements Eco-Friendly Round Ring Binder, Recycled PRESSTEX Round Ring Binders, ReBinder Round Ring Binders and Replacement Covers, and others	www.thegreenoffice.com
Notebook Dividers	Avery	PE, PP dividers	www.avery.com (available at most national chains including Staples, CVS, and Target)

Academic Supplies

CHEJ does not endorse any of these products, manufacturers or retailers, nor provide any warranty of the appropriateness of listed products.

Category	School Supply	Retailer or Manufacturer	PVC-Free Products and Alternative Materials	More Information	
Academic Supplies	Notebook Dividers	Better Office	PP line of products	www.betteroffice.com	
		Office Depot	Office Depot® Brand Durable Plastic Polyethylene 5-Tab Color Dividers	www.officedepot.com	
		Sustainable Group	Retab Binder Divider Tabs (recycled cardboard)	www.thegreenoffice.com	
	Notebooks	Better Office	Website contains extensive PVC-free school supply product collection		www.betteroffice.com
		Green Vision	HDPE plastic (recycled) used for covers. Green Vision is a PVC-free source for most all common school supplies. Green Vision operates a program allowing a school to design (color and logo) its own school supplies that are then purchased through Green Vision's website by parents. The program also operates as a fundraising tool since the school receives a rebate on all supplies purchased by parents. Please see the website for more information		www.greenvision4biz.com
		Mirage Paper Company	Ecojot Greenlined Journal Notebook. 100% recycled, chlorine-free paper; paperboard cover; vegetable-based inks		www.ecojot.com
		The Green Office	Elements EcoFriendly Binders. Website contains extensive office supply collection		www.thegreenoffice.com
	Pens / Pencils / Erasers / Markers	Bic Corporation	Round Stic Ballpoint Pen has a PP barrel		www.thegreenoffice.com
		Faber-Castell	All Faber-Castell products are PVC free. The mechanical pencils come in many colors and designs		www.faber-castell.com
		Green Vision	Recycled wood and recycled metal used		www.greenvision4biz.com (see above "Notebooks" for more info)
		Industries of the Blind	All pens are PVC-free		www.industriesoftheblind.com

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Category

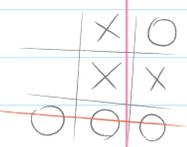
School Supply	Retailer or Manufacturer	PVC-Free Products and Alternative Materials	More Information
Pens / Pencils / Erasers / Markers	Pilot	Pilot BeGreen pens are PVC-free	Pilot BeGreen pens are available at most office supply outlets
	The Green Office	PVC-free plastic clips	www.thegreenoffice.com
	Vegetarian Shoes	Biodegradable pens	www.veganesentials.com
	Zebra Pens	"Eco Line" pens are PVC-free	Available at Staples and Office Max.
Planners/ Address Books	Mirage Paper Company	EcoAgenda: 100 sheets, 6x9"	www.ecojot.com
	The Green Office	At-a-glance dayplanners	www.thegreenoffice.com
Report Covers	The Green Office	Pressboard Report Cover With Reinforced Top Hinges, Pressboard Report Covers With Tyvek Reinforced Hinges	www.thegreenoffice.com
Sheet Protectors	The Green Office	Easy Load Top Loading Recycled Polypropylene Sheet Protectors	www.thegreenoffice.com
Clothing	Evo	PVC-free Products: Wide variety of clothing.	www.evo.com/clothes
	H&M	All H&M products are PVC-free	www.hm.com
Glasses	H&M	Nose pads on glasses: silicone	www.hm.com
	L.L. Bean	All L.L. Bean glasses are PVC free	www.llbean.com
	Speedo	All Speedo glasses are PVC free	www.speedo.com
Sneakers	Adidas	Sandals: EVA, rubber outsole; Sneakers: molded EVA insole and midsole	www.adidas.com
	Asics	All Asics products are PVC-free. Bamboo, canvas, EVA, leather, rubber, etc	www.asicsamerica.com
	Birkenstocks	Uppers: birko-Flor material (acrylic and PA), leather, wool; Footbed: cork, leather, jute; Soles: EVA, PU	www.birkenstocks.com

Academic Supplies

Apparel



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Category	School Supply	Retailer or Manufacturer	PVC-Free Products and Alternative Materials	More Information
Apparel	Sneakers	Crocs	“CrosLite” resins (EVA), some with rubber sole. Note – some Croc knockoffs, like the Kamid Doodle, are made out of PVC. Many of the charms sold to decorate crocs are made with PVC	www.crocs.com
		Ecolution	Hemp, plant-based dyes, recycled tires	www.ecolution.com
		L.L. Bean	all L.L. Bean shoes are PVC-free	www.llbean.com
		Nike	Nike products are PVC-free	www.nike.com
		Rawganique	Hemp, recycled tires	www.rawganique.com
		Simple Shoes	PVC-free. Primary materials are bamboo, cotton, hemp, and recycled rubber	www.simpleshoes.com
Art Supplies	Aprons & Smocks	Bumkins	Waterproof Art Smock	www.bumkins.com
		Ecowise	Waterproof Super Art Smock	www.ecowise.com
Art Supplies	Modeling Clays	Crayola	Air-dry clay. Avoid Sculpy and Fimo clay	www.crayola.com
		Mary’s Softdough	Chemical free formula: only 7 total ingredients - comes in multiple colors and textures	www.softdough.com
		Play-Doh	Flour-based	www.hasbro.com
Backpacks	Backpacks	CBH Studio	Only three of their entire large product line are PVC-free: E_Max Laptop Back, Kiwi Bird Backpack, and Polar Bear Backpack	www.cbhstudio.com
		Fleurville	Kid’s Messenger, People Pak	www.fleurville.com
		High Sierra	Denier Polymer Fabric	www.highsierrasport.com
		Jansport	All Jansport products are PVC and lead free	www.jansport.com
		Land’s End	Alternative materials. All Land’s End backpacks are PVC-free	www.landsend.com

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Category	School Supply	Retailer or Manufacturer	PVC-Free Products and Alternative Materials	More Information
Backpacks	Backpacks	Progressive Kid	Kids Backpack/Messenger Bag (various designs), People Pak, Re-Run Messenger (various designs)	www.progressivekid.com
		Rawganique	Hemp based products	www.rawganique.com
		Seal Line Gear	Urban Backpack, Shoulder Bag and Tote Bag: PVC-Free Boundary Backpack (other bags have PVC). PU-coated polyester and scrim-reinforced urethane	www.seallingear.com
		Targus	"Grove" line, "Designed for Dell" line, and "EcoSmart" lines all PVC-free	www.targus.com
		Timbuk2	Most contain PVC but a few products are PVC-free: Hemp, nylon, PET, TPU waterproof liner	www.timbuk2.com
		Vulcana	Products made from recycled tires using specialized process creating a unique material	www.vulcanabags.com
Electronics	Cell Phones	Apple	All Apple cell phones are PVC free	www.apple.com
		Motorola	Moto W239 Renew, Moto RAZR V9	www.motorola.com
		Nokia	All new Nokia products (after 2007) are PVC-free	www.nokia.com
		Panasonic	P906i	www.panasonic.com
		Samsung	SGH-F268 model is their only PVC free model	www.samsung.com
		Sony Ericsson	All new Sony Ericsson phones are PVC-free	www.sonyericsson.com
Computer Monitors	Computer Monitors	Acer	G24 LCD monitor is PVC free in everything except the power cord	www.acer-group.com
		Apple	All products are PVC free with the exception of power-cords	www.apple.com
		Dell	G-series monitors	www.dell.com
		Lenovo	ThinkVision series	www.lenovo.com

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Category	School Supply	Retailer or Manufacturer	PVC-Free Products and Alternative Materials	More Information
Electronics	Flash Drives	GreenVision	Bamboo cased flash drives. See Notebooks section above for information on Green Vision	www.greenvision4biz.com
	Laptops	Apple	All products after 2008 are PVC free with the exception of the external power-cords	www.apple.com
		Sony	Vaio models - PVC free on the exterior casing and cables, but some PVC is still used internally	www.sony.com
Lunch Supplies	Lunch Boxes and Bags	Arctic Zone	Items marked "ultra safe" are PVC and lead free	www.arcticzone.com : available at Target
		Built	Munchler lunch bag made of PP	www.builtny.com
		California Innovations	Hi-Top Munchsak, Lunch Pack, Pattern Tote, Power Pack Plus, Secret Bucket, Upright HardBody Lunch Box, "Ultra Safe lining"	www.californiainnovations.com : available at CVS
	Crocodile Creek	PVC and lead-free	www.crocodilecreek.com	
	Ecobags	Canvas, organic canvas or recycled canvas with Velcro close	www.ecobags.com	
	Fleurville	Lunch Buddy, Lunch Pack	www.fleurville.com	
	Greenfeet	Laptop Lunchbox System	www.greenfeet.com	
	GreenVision	Cotton and PP lunch bags. See Notebooks section above for information about Green Vision	www.greenvision4biz.com	
	Igloo	Playmate cooler, max cold cooler	www.igloo-store.com : available at CVS and Rite Aid	
	Land's End	Character Lunch Box, ClassMate, Deluxe Lunch Sack, HotStuff, Lunch Sack, Therma Cool	www.landsend.com	

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Category

School Supply	Retailer or Manufacturer	PVC-Free Products and Alternative Materials	More Information
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Lunch Boxes and Bags	Mimi the Sardine "The Lunch Bug"	Acrylic, cotton	www.mimithesardine.com
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Lunch Wraps	Glad	HDPE, LDPE, PP	www.target.com
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Greenfeet	PVC-free plastic	www.greenfeet.com
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Natural Value	HDPE, LDPE, PP	www.kmart.com
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New Wave Enviro	100% bamboo lunch bag	www.newwaveenviro.com
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Reusablebags.com	ACME Bags Recycled cotton lunch bags, ACME Bags recycled PET thermal lunch bags, Built NY lunch bags, Kids Konserve Waste-Free lunch kit, Mimi the Sardine cloth lunch bags - all PVC-free and lead-free	www.reusablebags.com
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Rubbermaid	HDPE, LDPE, PP. Note - Rubbermaid does use polycarbonate plastic in some of its products. They are labeled on their website	www.target.com
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Saran Wrap	Premium Wrap, Cling Plus Wrap, both made out of polyethylene. Note - the original Saran Wrap was made out of PVC but SC Johnson reformulated the product to remove all PVC	www.saranbrands.com
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The Soft Landing	All products are PVC, BHA, and phthalate free on this website including Kids Konserve Waste-Free lunch kit, Aladdin Lunch & Go, Laptop Lunch Kit, Olunchbox Kit, Built NY lunch bag.	www.thesoftlanding.com
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Tin Box Company	Tin	www.tinboxco.com
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Reusable Water Bottles

Most reusable water bottles are not made out of PVC, but many are made out of polycarbonate plastic which can leach bisphenol A (BPA). The list below provides waterbottles that are BPA free.

California Innovations	Hydration bottle with insulated wrap: PVC and BPA free	www.californiainnovations.com : available at CVS
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Gaiam	Aluminum bottle	www.gaiam.com : available at Target
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Lunch Supplies



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Category

School Supply	Retailer or Manufacturer	PVC-Free Products and Alternative Materials	More Information
Reusable Water Bottles	Greenfeet	Stainless steel bottle, PP lid	www.greenfeet.com
	GreenVision	Stainless steel bottle. See Notebooks section above for information about Green Vision	www.greenvision4biz.com
	iPlay Baby Wear	Aqua bottles	www.iplaybabywear.com
	Kleen Kanteen	Stainless steel bottles, PP lid	www.kleenkanteen.com
	Nalgene	All new Nalgene products are BPA free. Older models contain BPA and should be avoided	www.nalgene-outdoor.com
	REI	Sells many BPA-free water bottles	www.rei.com
	Target	Sells many reusable water bottles advertised as BPA-free in their stores	www.target.com
	The Soft Landing	All water bottle are PVC-free	www.thesoftlanding.com
	Thermos	Food jars- both plastic and steel are BPA and PVC free	www.thermos.com
Rainboots	Hatley	Rubber rainboots	www.hatley.com
	iPlay Baby Wear	Rubber rainboots, Aqua shoes (EVA)	www.iplaybabywear.com
	H&M	EVA, nylon, PE, polyester, PP, PU	www.hm.com
Raincoats	iPlay Baby Wear	Children's Raincoats. Waterproof fabric	www.target.com
	L.L. Bean	Waterproof TEK2.5 nylon, all L.L. Bean raingear is PVC free	www.llbean.com
	Land's End	Kid's Solid Rain slicker, Men's / Women's Microfiber Rain Jacket, Women's Aquacheck Jacket. Microfiber, nylon	www.landsend.com
	Puddlegear	All products are PVC free	www.puddlegear.com
	The North Face	HyVent (PU). Caution: their GoreTex fabrics contain PVC	www.thenorthface.com
Umbrellas	Hatley	100% nylon	www.hatley.com

Lunch Supplies

Rain Gear

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Rain Gear	Umbrellas	iPlay Baby Wear	Rubber, nylon, EVA	www.iplaybabywear.com
		Newport Raingear	100% Nylon, beware this brand's ponchos are made of vinyl	www.biglotswholesale.com : also available at CVS
		Organically Hatched	Waterproof, PVC-free umbrellas	www.organicallyhatched.com
		Raines by Totes	Eco-umbrella	www.totes-isotoner.com : also available at Staples and Office Depot
		The Weather Station	100% polyester, 100% nylon	Available at Rite Aid

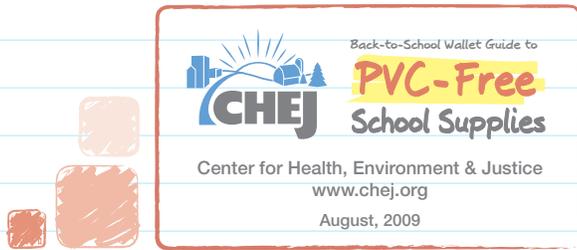
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Other Toxic Plastics to Avoid

Plastic	Why It's Bad	Where Found / How to Identify
Acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS)	This plastic is manufactured with styrene, a chemical that can damage the nervous system and is listed as a possible human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. Other key chemicals used in its manufacture include acrylonitrile and butadiene, which are both listed as possible human carcinogens.	This plastic was not part of the original plastics ID system, so it lacks a number. It is often used in piping, musical instruments, automotive parts, wheel covers, and toys,
Polycarbonate (PC)	Polycarbonate plastic is manufactured with a synthetic sex hormone, bisphenol A (BPA). In 2008, the National Toxicology Program (NTP) raised concerns that exposure to BPA during pregnancy and childhood could impact the developing breast and prostate and affect brain development and behavior in American children. In October of 2008, the Canadian government classified BPA as "toxic" and moved toward restricting its use in baby bottles.	Often (though not always) marked with a "7" (which indicates "other" types of plastic) with the letters "PC" underneath the recycling symbol. Polycarbonate is a hard, durable plastic typically used to make reusable water bottles and baby bottles, in food can linings, and more.
Polystyrene (PS)	Polystyrene is manufactured with styrene, a chemical that can damage the nervous system and is listed as a possible human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. Toxic chemicals leach out of polystyrene into food when heated. Manufacture also contributes to ozone formation.	This plastic is often marked with a "6" and used in food service items, such as cups, plates, bowls, cutlery, clamshell takeout containers, and rigid food containers. It's also used in packing peanuts, compact disc cases and other applications.

Download the Wallet-Guide

For a handy “wallet-size” version of this Back-to-School guide to PVC-free School Supplies, visit: <http://www.chej.org/publications/PVCGuide/PVCwallet.pdf>



For Parents Learn More & Get Involved!

We hope you find these tips useful as you go shopping for school supplies. Visit our website at <http://www.besafenet.com/pvc> to sign up for our PVC Action Network e-mail list and learn more ways you can create and sustain a healthy environment for your family!

For Companies Want to Be in the Guide?

We may publish an updated version of this guide next year, so please send us information about your company's products if you'd like to be listed in future editions. To be considered, please e-mail mike@chej.org with the subject "PVC-free school supplies".

About the Center for Health, Environment and Justice

CHEJ mentors the movement to build healthier communities by empowering people to prevent the harm caused by chemical and toxic threats. We accomplish our work by connecting local community groups to national initiatives and corporate campaigns. CHEJ works with communities to empower groups by providing the tools, strategic vision, and encouragement they need to advocate for human health and the prevention of harm.

Following her successful effort to prevent further harm for families living in contaminated Love Canal, Lois Gibbs founded CHEJ in 1981 to continue the journey. To date, CHEJ has assisted over 10,000 groups nationwide. Details on CHEJ's efforts to help families and communities prevent harm can be found on www.chej.org.

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