

# The Truth about Biodegradable Poop Bags

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If you're anything like me, you pick up your dog's waste in a **green poop bag**, toss it in the trash bin, and feel pretty good. After all, you're helping the environment while cleaning up after your pooch. Unfortunately, according to the Federal Trade Commission, there's something stinky in the world of "biodegradable" poop bag manufacturers. What's a responsible dog owner to do? Is there such a thing as a poop bag that's good for the environment? We've got the scoop on earth-friendly poop bags and how to use them.

According to a [press release](#) made by the FTC in 2015, marketers of dog waste bags "may be deceiving consumers with the use of their unqualified 'biodegradable' claim." If a product says it's biodegradable, consumers like you and me probably think it will break down in the trash or composting bin. But due to unregulated guidelines and misleading packaging, it's possible the poop bags you're using aren't as earth-friendly as they seem.

[ASTM International standards](#) determine the level to which plastics are biodegradable, and not all poop bags degrade quickly or safely according to these standards. The best poop bags meet their most stringent criteria, [ASTM D6400](#), which is given to products that actually *compost*. [BioBags](#) meet this criteria, as do a handful of other brands we've listed below.

## Why "biodegradable" can be misleading

According to the FTC's [Green Guide](#), which provide information to companies on how to ethically market earth-friendly products, "a marketer making an unqualified degradable claim should have competent and reliable scientific evidence that **the entire item will completely break down and return to nature...within a reasonably short period of time.**" In other words, poop bag manufacturers should be able to prove that their product biodegrades as promised. And that's simply not possible for many brands.

**Unfortunately, many poop bags that claim to be earth-friendly or biodegradable don't actually break down within a year, and some never degrade at all.**

But it's not necessarily the poop bag's fault. Even the very best, most scientifically-proven biodegradable plastics won't degrade in a landfill, where compression and lack of oxygen lead to "mummification" of garbage ([source](#)). To get the best results from earth-friendly poop bags, you have to dispose of them correctly.

Due to the controversy over labeling, and evolving laws and regulations on a state-by-state basis, some poop bag companies have changed the language on their labels. For example, [PoopBags.com](#) no longer includes the term "biodegradable" on their packaging, even though their [plant-based poop bags](#) have been [proven](#) to decompose successfully in commercial composting facilities and in a natural setting.

## How not to scoop the poop

I know what you're thinking: isn't there only one way to use a poop bag? It's not how you **scoop** the poop that matters, but **how you throw it away**. It takes a little extra legwork to maximize a poop bag's earth-friendliness. First, here are a few "don'ts" of dog doo-doo disposal:

- Don't throw poop bags in the regular trash, where they'll end up in a landfill
- Don't put them in your home garden compost, as animal waste contains pathogens that can be harmful to humans
- Don't put them in municipal yard waste bins, as most city compost facilities do not allow pet waste

**For biodegradable poop bags to work effectively, they need to be disposed of correctly.**

### **How to be a super scooper**

Here are some ways to make the best use of biodegradable pet waste bags:

- **Use a dog-waste-only composting bin.** There are several commercial options like the Doggie Doolie on the market, but you can also make your own with supplies available at your local home and garden store. While pet waste compost should never be used on edible plants, it can be great fertilizer for decorative gardens!
- **Flush it.** Yes, depending on where you live, you can flush dog poop in water-soluble waste bags. Just be sure to check with your municipal sewage guidelines, and never flush pet waste into a septic tank.
- **Bury it.** This option works best if you live in a rural area with space away from the house. Waste should be buried at least five inches underground, away from vegetable gardens and water sources.
- **Transport it to an industrial composting facility that accepts pet waste**, or hire a waste removal company that does the dirty work for you (for example: Portland's Green Pet Compost Company).

Of course, you can also forgo the bag completely. Using a hand-held scoop or shovel to transfer dog waste from the ground to a composting bin, toilet, or hole in the ground may be the most earth-friendly option. But let's be realistic: for those of living and working in densely populated areas, the poop bag is the way to go. We just need to use them correctly.

### **The best earth-friendly poop bags available**

Okay, so you've considered all of the above—but you know that, realistically, the easiest way to deal with dog poop is to bag it and toss it. Here are a few bags that meet standards for effective biodegradation, so long as they're disposed of properly:

- **PoopBags.com**'s plant-based waste bags, made from renewable resources such as corn, vegetable oils, and plant starches. PoopBags.com also makes bags from recycled materials that, while not compostable, help to reduce the environmental impact of dog waste and new plastic.
- **BioBag Pet Waste Bags** are made out of a resin derived from plants, vegetable oils and compostable polymers, and break down completely in the right conditions.
- **Flush Puppies Doodie Bags**, made from water-soluble Polyvinyl Alcohol (PVA). As the FlushPuppies website says, you can "compost 'em, flush 'em or trash 'em" (though they recommend flushing or industrial composting only).
- **BioDOGgradable bags** are made from a bioplastic compound containing cereal flour and biodegradable polymers. The company is careful to note that "claims of 100% degradation or biodegradation are difficult to prove," but their bags are designed to be composted in a safe backyard composter or industrial facility.

When used properly, poop bags made of biodegradable ingredients can help take a load off Mother Earth. And generally speaking, they're still the best choice, even when you're tossing them in trash. It's still a better option than letting it sit on the ground! Whether you install a pet waste composter in your back yard or put biodegradable bags in the garbage, you're doing your part by keeping loose poop off the streets.