

Skip the Stuff Town Case Study Guide



Thank you for your leadership and activism to make a difference. Your efforts will help ensure compliance with the new Skip the Stuff law that went into effect here in New Jersey on August 1, 2026. More importantly, it will help businesses understand their cost savings and other benefits. The goal is for businesses to **WANT** to follow Skip the Stuff so they reinforce their employees to do the right thing.

Basic take-out policy:



Simply said, Skip the Stuff is not a ban, but has customers only get single-use cutlery and condiments upon request. That request can be made verbally by themselves, or the business may ask if they want disposable cutlery or condiments. Or, businesses may provide a self-serve dispenser for customers to select items that they need, but it must only dispense individual items.

No “bundles” of cutlery (cutlery wrapped in plastic containing multiple items) may be provided to customers after August 1, 2027.

Basic dine-in policy:

Restaurants that have seating for 10 or more customers and are considered full service (i.e. have a wait staff) must only serve customers with reusable cutlery.

Case Study purpose:

There have been several Skip the Stuff town case studies, with **Red Bank** being the first that shows a 94% reduction in cutlery and condiments that businesses are providing customers. More town case studies are needed to more accurately represent the cost savings and waste reduction that Skip the Stuff has provided. When this data is shared, it will further help businesses understand the importance of the law and it will help other states follow New Jersey’s example.

Need more detail? Key provisions of the law:



Red Bank Case Study:



Benefits of Skip the Stuff:

- Huge financial savings to restaurants. Some restaurants are saving over a thousand dollars per month by not giving customers what they don’t want.
- Customers appreciate not getting unwanted stuff that they either throw away or put in a kitchen junk drawer.
- Studies show that 70% of street litter is from food and beverage containers and beach clean-ups show that over 40% of what is collected is from plastic food packaging. This litter clogs storm drains which can add to local flooding, let alone being an eyesore and require municipalities to spend time and resources to clean up.
- Plastic is linked to numerous health issues like infertility, cancers, mental health, Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases.

What to do when planning to conduct a town Skip the Stuff case study:

- Be sure to visit a variety of different types of restaurants, i.e. diners, casual, family-style, fine dining, and different ethnicities.
- Each town will have a different number of establishments but be sure to visit a good representation. Thirty (30) is a good number depending on the size of the town, but the more restaurants you can speak with the better. This helps reinforce the law and more data will make a more accurate case study.
- Always try to speak with a manager or restaurant owner. They will have the best ability to answer your questions and ultimately “buy-in” and in turn educate their staff and customers.
- Understand that restaurants are busy and likely you will not get more than 5-8 minutes to ask your questions. Avoid peak mealtimes which may vary depending on the type of business.
- Be approachable/friendly. Dress respectfully but not formally. This will help get someone to talk with you!
- Take detailed notes. Too much is better than not enough!

Sample introduction as you enter a restaurant:

- Hi. My name is _____ and I’m a _____
(*name your school/grade*) partnering with Clean Water Action. Is there a manager or owner I can speak with for a few minutes to let them know about the new state Skip the Stuff law that saves restaurants money. (Important to highlight cost savings early.) [*Wait for owner/manager....*]
- Repeat above bullet to introduce yourself to owner/manager.
- The law, which is commonly called Skip the Stuff, went into effect on August 1, 2026 but there’s 180 days, about 6 months, written into the law to help educate people about it.
- Skip the Stuff (sometimes called Cut the Cutlery) is the law that has businesses only give single-use cutlery and condiments upon request. It saves restaurants money because studies show that usually customers throw away much of what they are given in take-out without ever using it. Some restaurants we are working with are now saving over a thousand dollars a month.
- This law enables restaurants to only give customers what they want. If a customer asks for 3 forks and 2 ketchup packets that’s what they get. No more or less. Personally, my family has a junk drawer at home full of unwanted forks and ketchup packets that we ultimately throw away.
- We are doing a quick town-wide survey in _____ [*name the town*]
to assess how much the new “Skip the Stuff” law will save restaurants money and reduce waste. We will share the town-wide results in the form of a case study. It is basically just four quick questions. Is that ok? [*Wait...*] Thanks!

To fill in prior to entering restaurant:

Restaurant Name: _____

Restaurant Style: *Ex: Full service, Diner, Italian, Chinese, Casual (order at counter)*

Questions to ask restaurants:

1. On average, roughly how many take-out orders do you get on a daily or weekly basis?

2. Per order, how many meals are being ordered? *Ex: 2 orders of pasta and appetizer*

3. When someone makes a take-out order, what types and how much cutlery is being given?

Ex: individual forks vs individual forks wrapped in plastic vs bundles.

If bundles, what do they include? *(Try to physically see to confirm if possible)*

Bundles, Y/N:

• **If YES**, does it have a: FORK SPOON KNIFE SALT PEPPER NAPKIN
(circle all that apply)

• **If NO**, are customers given a:

FORK quantity: _____ or handful KNIFE quantity: _____ or handful

SPOON quantity: _____ or handful NAPKIN quantity: _____ or handful

4. What types of condiments are given with each order? Do you count or is it generally a handful?

Ex: ketchup, mayonnaise, soy sauce, hot sauce, butter, syrup, etc.

condiment: _____ quantity: _____

condiment: _____ quantity: _____

condiment: _____ quantity: _____

condiment: _____ quantity: _____

condiment: _____ quantity: _____

condiment: _____ quantity: _____

Thank you so much for your time. I will come back in a few months to ask these questions again and see how much you are saving.
If you have any questions, please reach out to Marta Young with Clean Water Action, myoung@cleanwater.org.

