

Kobe College Entrance Examination in English
(総合型選抜入試)

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You might have noticed over the past ten years that the supermarkets have gradually started charging you when they give you a plastic bag. The cost is often low—only a few cents—but those bags used to be free. In some places in the world, plastic bags are even being banned. People are no longer able to receive a plastic bag in which to carry the things they buy. Why is this happening?

These stores are often following new government regulations, or the stores' own regulations, to reduce the use of plastic bags because they are bad for the environment. Plastic takes a long time to break down—possibly hundreds of years. Also, plastic bags end up in the ocean and on land, which can harm animals and look ugly.

People who support the ban of plastic bags say it is an obvious, good policy. They say that reducing the use of plastic bags will save the lives of many ocean animals and it will reduce the amount of garbage humans produce. However, there have been some arguments against banning plastic bags. Some have pointed out that plastic bags are a relatively minor environmental problem. For example, they barely impact climate change. Also, people claim that modern plastic bags break down faster than many other plastic items, possibly in only two decades. Finally, a study in Ireland showed that when plastic bags were taxed (not even banned), people began using plastic garbage bags for shopping, which were even worse for the environment.

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