

May 12, 2025 Special Town Meeting
Article 11
Amend General By-Laws
Plastic Food and Beverage Serveware and Single-Use Items



What does the Skip-the-Stuff (Article 11) bylaw mean?

Skip the Stuff is a campaign that promotes a shift from restaurants automatically including accessories (like utensils, condiment packets, extra containers, napkins, etc.) in takeout and delivery orders to only providing them upon request.

The bylaw has three parts:

- 1) Requires that restaurants make accessories available only upon request by the customer.
- 2) Requires that businesses update their online ordering software to include a way to opt-in for specific accessories, like utensils, napkins and condiments, but provides an exception if it is too difficult for a restaurant to convert their software.
- 3) Requires that full-service restaurants (where customers are seated and served by wait staff) provide reusable plates, cups, utensils, etc., rather than disposable.

Will I still be able to get utensils or ketchup for my takeout order?

Yes, but you will have to specifically request that the restaurant include those items with your takeout or delivery order. They will not automatically be included.

How do I request certain accessories?

When you make your order online, restaurants can provide a list of accessories for you to select from. They will need to add an extra section to their online ordering sites, called “accessories” to be included with appetizers, entrees, drinks, and dessert menu sections. Similarly, if you place an order by phone, you can verbally make a request for any accessory you prefer.

If you are picking up your order in person, restaurants can offer a self-service area for you to pick up utensils and condiments.

Will it be difficult for restaurants to modify their online menus?

The top delivery companies, like DoorDash, Uber Eats, Grubhub, Postmates, and Seamless have already modified their software because larger cities, like NYC, Washington D.C, Chicago and Denver have already passed Skip the Stuff laws. Toast has also modified their software to include a menu of accessories. Smaller food establishments are able to modify their online menus as well.

If it is too difficult for a food establishment to modify their online menu, a provision is written into the bylaw that states they do not have to make any changes to their online software. However, the default is that they will not include any accessories with delivery or takeout orders. If a customer would like an accessory, the customer can pick it up from the restaurant or at a self-service station when they pick up their food.

Will Skip-the-Stuff cost businesses extra money?

It is expected that businesses will save money because they are not automatically handing out utensils, napkins and condiments to every customer. Needham restaurants have indicated in a survey that they support the adoption of Skip the Stuff, as does the Charles River Regional Chamber.

Does Skip-the-Stuff actually work to reduce plastics and save businesses money?

Toast, a point of sale management provider, provides an example of a sandwich shop in Brookline that modified their online ordering to allow customers to opt in if they want utensils and accessories. Toast reports that in 6 months, 76% of the shop's online orders went out without any accessories, saving the restaurant over 6,000 pieces of packaging, and thousands of dollars.

Have any neighboring communities adopted Skip the Stuff?

Yes. Newton adopted Skip the Stuff in September 2023, and Wellesley voted to adopt Skip the Stuff this Spring at their Town Meeting. It will go into effect in Wellesley on January 1, 2026, which is the same time frame we are proposing in Needham.