



PUT THE BRAKES ON LITTER.



Driver's Education Student Guide

As a Louisiana driver, you have the responsibility to keep yourself and your passengers safe. You also have the responsibility to be a mobile steward of our environment. Keep Louisiana litter-free and beautiful by minimizing the impact you have on the roads you travel.

What is litter?

Litter is defined as "misplaced solid waste." We often see it as trash scattered along the side of the road and along waterways. People litter for various reasons – some believe it is too inconvenient to dispose of their waste properly; some believe that someone else will pick it up; some don't think about the consequences of litter; and some simply don't care. But if we care about our state and the health and beauty of its land, water and animals, then we must learn to care about ending the litter problem in Louisiana.

Drivers contribute to over 50% of all roadside litter in Louisiana. They flick cigarette butts out the window, toss plastic bags and bottles on the road, and allow fast food packaging to blow from their cars and truck beds. All of this debris certainly adds up, and the unfortunate end result is the severe environmental degradation of our Sportsman's Paradise.

Litter is harmful.

Eighty percent (80%) of trash dropped on land eventually finds its way to a waterway, where it damages wildlife, marine life, and water quality. Plastic bags and bottles float through our watershed, entangling marine life, damaging their habitats, and releasing dangerous pollutants and toxins into our bayous, rivers, lakes, and eventually, the Gulf.

Cigarettes are the most littered item in the world, and potentially the most hazardous. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable, and are loaded with over 165 dangerous chemicals and carcinogens including arsenic, formaldehyde, lead, and acetone that quickly leach into the water. When animals ingest these chemicals, it not only leads to their harm and death, but also becomes part of our food chain and creates toxicity in humans as well. Turtles, birds, and fish often try to eat littered cigarette butts and other small littered items, mistaking them for food, and can become sick or die. In fact, these items are often found in the bellies of marine life and birds that have spent a lifetime ingesting them.

But what about biodegradable items – are they considered litter? Absolutely. Food items such as apple cores, banana peels, and the remains of a half-eaten sandwich tossed out the window of a vehicle attract rodents and pests. This provides a breeding ground for bacteria and disease, which can quickly snowball into a public health problem.

Litter is illegal.

Whether accidental or deliberate, littering is against the law. Depending on the nature and severity of the offense, litterers face civil or criminal prosecution. According to Louisiana R.S. 30:2531-2531.3, penalties for conviction range from a \$150 fine plus eight hours of community service to a \$10,000 fine, one-year driver's license suspension, thirty days in jail and up to one hundred hours of community service.

As a driver, you are responsible for all litter that leaves your vehicle or truck bed. You can be cited for littering committed by passengers in your vehicle or for litter that blows out of the bed of your truck. By law, loaded truck beds must be covered to prevent debris and cargo from falling out while driving, which could injure other drivers, cause accidents, or end up as roadside litter.

If you witness littering or illegal dumping, you can call your local police department or report it by calling 1-888-LITRBUG or by [using the LADWF TIPS app](#), a tool provided by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Litter is costly.

Each year in Louisiana, local and state agencies spend more than \$40 million on litter abatement and prevention. Nationally, litter cleanups and prevention programs cost more than \$11.5 billion each year. For each piece of litter dropped, it costs litter abatement programs about \$.30 to pick it up. And for litter that isn't picked up, there are a number of indirect costs that result.

Littering has a number of indirect costs that may not be so obvious. Research has found that littering and blight leads to other criminal behaviors, such as vandalism, theft and graffiti due to a shift in public perception that there is tolerance for the disregard of civil and property laws in that community. On the flip side, people are less likely to litter and damage property in neighborhoods and communities that are well kept and litter free.

The presence of litter in a community has been shown to decrease property values by approximately seven percent. Litter and neglect deters business growth, and prospective new businesses hesitate to invest in a community that doesn't take pride in its appearance. Litter also hurts tourism -- people simply don't want to visit trashy areas, which obscures the beauty of a place and sends a message that those who live there don't care about it. Litter gives Louisiana a tarnished image.

Litter is preventable.

The good news is that litter is entirely preventable. All roadside litter could be eliminated if we each took ownership of our own waste. All we have to do is simply clean up our own space, and never assume that someone else will do it for us. If each of us does his own part, we can restore, protect, and preserve the beauty of our nation's great Sportsman's Paradise.

As a Louisiana driver, you have the power and obligation to keep Louisiana beautiful by taking the Litter-Free Louisiana Roadside Pledge:

- ✓ I will keep a reusable litter bag inside my vehicle and use it consistently.
- ✓ I will never keep trash in the bed of my truck and will cover my load.
- ✓ I will insist that no one in my car litters.
- ✓ I will choose reusable instead of disposable items whenever possible so that I don't produce trash in the first place.

Keep Louisiana Beautiful is a statewide organization that works to protect the environment and beautify communities through education, enforcement and programming. Please join Keep Louisiana Beautiful in its ongoing efforts to clean and beautify our roadways, public spaces, parks, and waterways by volunteering in your local community. Please visit www.keeplouisianabeautiful.org to find an affiliate organization near you.