1. **How should e-waste be disposed of?**

Electronic waste (e-waste) generates from any device that runs on batteries/electricity or needs to be charged regularly and has reached the end of its life. It ranges from batteries, headphones, chargers to consumer equipment like refrigerators, washing machines etc. E-waste has been referred to as the fastest growing stream of waste globally. While it contains precious metals, it also houses hazardous components that are harmful for human health. Therefore, it is important to manage and recycle e-waste through the right channels, such as Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs). There are close to 50 PROs across India that hand over the e-waste to over 400 different authorized recyclers that manage it in an environmentally sound manner.

Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs) can be used to channelise e-waste sustainably. A few of the PROs working in this sector are Karo Sambhav and Reverse Logistics Group, India.

2. **How do we manage the chemical waste from school laboratories?**

There can be two types of chemical waste that are generated from school laboratories. First is expired chemicals for which the easiest way to manage is by getting in touch with your distributor. The distributors deal directly with the manufacturer and can help you channelize your expired lot to the source. The other type of chemical waste can be the used chemicals that have undergone some kind of reaction, these can be disposed of in the hazardous waste bin.

3. **Are there any specific laws to prevent MNCs and market giants from spreading false information regarding the recyclability of their packaging material?**

We do have laws in our country that require the brand owners to specify the kind of plastic (polymer) that they use in their packaging. Every plastic packaging will have the famous three chasing arrows with a number printed in the middle, denoting the type of polymer that is used to make the packaging material. The problem is that seeing those three chasing arrows convinces consumers like ourselves that these packaging materials are recyclable, which is not always the case. So a more robust system of labeling for the packaging plastic is the need of the hour.

4. **Walking through a typical grocery or drug store, there are still many products that don’t have waste-free or limited-packaging options. What advice would you give to**
people who want to reduce their impact on the planet but are limited by their situation? Is there a term for people who aspire to be zero-waste, but haven’t reached their goal yet?

The best way to make an impact is to be mindful of the products that we need to buy, research more into what are the possible alternatives that are more sustainable. Although, there is a lot of stuff for which there is no alternative available, we need to start with small steps and eventually target bigger goals, for instance, joining a group of like-minded people who will keep you motivated, share their knowledge, and insights with you and start a movement in your neighborhood to make people aware of of the alternatives and join your group in boycotting certain products. You could also write to the companies that make these products sharing your concerns with them.

5. What makes some plastics recyclable and others not?

The type of polymers that are used to make plastic determines the recyclability of plastic. Most of the plastic across the globe is downcycled/upcycled into different materials and the process is called recycling. Ideally, a bottle should be recycled back to make a bottle and not a t-shirt, which in the true sense would be examples of zero waste and a circular economy. In some cases up/downcycling of plastic is possible but it is not economically feasible which makes the entire process much more expensive as compared to making products using virgin plastic.

6. We are in the middle of a pandemic, and it has generated a huge quantum of waste. In such a scenario, can zero waste still become a possibility in the following year?

It is true that the pandemic has derailed a lot of progress that was made, especially around the issue of plastic in the country. The amount of plastic waste that is being attributed to the pandemic is huge and it is important to protect the health and well being of humans, however, there are small steps that we can take in a pandemic world to minimize the amount of waste we generate:

- Use cloth masks instead of disposable ones.
- Use refillable handwash containers
- Buy larger sanitizer bottles and empty them in smaller reusable containers

7. What are some of the ways to start a zero waste journey?

- Segregate your waste
- Compost your food and kitchen waste
- Say no to non-recyclable packaging material
- Use glass, wood, and metal containers more often