

EASY WAYS TO BE GREEN

Going **Green** seems to be the trend lately. It's a great idea, but many people don't know what to do or how to find the time to become more environmentally friendly. There are so many small things that we can all do to contribute. Would you commit to changing one light bulb in your house to a compact fluorescent light bulb? If every home in America committed to this one small change, the pollution reduction would be equivalent to removing one million cars from the road! It doesn't take much effort to make a big impact, but we have to commit to change together. Here are some other changes that you might consider.

Driving

Carpooling is a great idea for getting kids to school or practice, and it can also be a smart choice for getting to work. If you live near coworkers or some of your neighbors work in close proximity to where you work, consider how much gas you'd save by driving together! For some of us carpooling isn't an option, but you can still plan ahead. Be as efficient as possible by combining trips to the hardware store, mall, and grocery store into one outing so you won't drive back and forth from your house several times. If you have a bicycle and only need to drive a short distance, then hop on your bike to save gas and get some exercise too!

If you're in the market for a new vehicle, check out <http://www.fueleconomy.gov>. This site will help you compare the fuel efficiency of different automobiles. However, if you're not planning on buying a new car anytime soon, then ensure your car is well maintained. Replacing a clogged air filter improves gas mileage up to 10% and keeping tires properly inflated can enhance gas mileage by almost 4%.

Shopping

The plastic bags we get from stores take a toll on the environment. Plastic bags are made from petroleum and it takes approximately 430,000 gallons of oil to produce 100 million plastic bags. In the United States about 100 billion plastic bags are discarded each year—imagine how much oil that is! It takes about 1000 years for plastic bags to break down! The small amounts that decompose contaminate both soil and water, and enter our food supply when animals accidentally ingest them. Ditch the plastic bag for a canvas one! Several grocery stores are promoting the purchase, use, and most importantly, reuse of canvas bags instead of plastic bags. It is actually much easier to carry a heavy load of groceries in a canvas bag. Leave the canvas bags in your car and carrying them will become a habit.

At Home

As previously mentioned, **trade your light bulbs for compact fluorescent light bulbs (C.F.L.).**



These bulbs are more expensive, but can last 12 times longer than traditional ones. A 30-watt C.F.L. produces about as much light as an ordinary 100-watt bulb. Again, if every American household replaced one regular light bulb with a C.F.L., the pollution reduction would be equivalent to removing one million cars from the road!



If you're ready to **replace some of your home appliances** check out <http://www.energystar.gov>. This site has information about appliances that meet the standards of the Energy Star program, which is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy. In 2006, the Energy Star program enabled Americans to save \$14 billion on their utility bills—the savings do add up!

Recycle! Consider separate bins for recyclables, like paper, glass, plastic, and aluminum. Trash companies often offer to take recyclables, but if not, find a facility near you and take it yourself. To find a facility near you, visit <http://earth911.org>.



Turn off the water while soaping hands and brushing teeth.

Using less water will lower both your electric and water bills; in addition, less energy will be used by the government to treat water in order to make it reusable. To reduce water usage in your home, turn off faucets when just running water and use lower-flow showerheads. Consider turning the water off when brushing your teeth as it can save 150 gallons of water per month or 1,800 gallons a year. Using cooler water is more environmentally friendly than using hot as it requires energy to turn on the water heater.

Finally, to keep your home energy efficient, **have your thermostat set to a reasonable temperature**. Programmable thermostats are great investments because they allow you the freedom to set your thermostat to maintain a less comfortable temperature while you're away from the home. The proper use of programmable thermostats can save about \$150 a year. Regulating the temperature inside the home is easier and more efficient when the house is well insulated, so make sure windows and doors are well sealed and leak proofed.

