

41 Inexpensive Ways to Go Green

Once you're ready to "go green," you'll find there are dozens of ways to reduce your environmental impact without draining your wallet. Here are 40+ ways to get started today:

#1: Buy a programmable thermostat.

Program your thermostat to conserve while you're away. You'll save energy and reduce your utility bills. While some programmable thermostats cost big bucks, you can buy this [simple model from Honeywell](#) for around \$80.



#2: Switch to ENERGY STAR approved appliances when you upgrade.

Even if you pay more upfront, you'll save money on utility bills. According to the [federal government](#), a comprehensive package of ENERGY STAR appliances can save up to \$80 per year in energy costs compared to regular appliances.

#3: Stop buying bottled water.

According to Ban the Bottle, Americans used 50 billion bottles of water last year, but only recycled around 23 percent. That means around 38 billion plastic bottles ended up in landfills. You can save money- and the planet – by carrying a reusable water bottle and refilling it over and over. If you don't like the taste of tap water, try filtering your own water with a filtered water pitcher at home.

#4: Pay your bills online.

Whenever possible, choose online bill-pay versus receiving a paper bill in the mail. Since nearly every vendor you work with wants to save money and postage, most businesses offer this option.

#5: Use heat and air conditioning in moderation.

While heat and AC may be necessary certain times of the year, you can save money and energy by using them only when necessary. When it's hot, cool off with fewer layers of clothing and a cold glass of ice water. If you have a ceiling fan, use it. When your home is cold, try bundling up with blankets and sweaters before cranking up the heat.

#6: Ride your bike instead of driving.

As traffic congestion and pollution get worse, many cities are opening bike paths to encourage self-transportation. By riding a bike whenever possible, you'll save money on gas, save wear and tear on your car, and improve your fitness.

#7: Replace old lightbulbs.

Compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) and light-emitting diodes (LEDs) last infinitely longer than your old incandescent bulbs. They may cost more upfront, but the energy savings add up over time.

#8: Buy second-hand clothing.

Shopping for clothing second-hand helps the planet in more than one way. First, it helps keep used clothing out of landfills. Second, it doesn't encourage the production of new clothing.

#9: Recycle when you can.

Many waste companies have instituted their own recycling programs, some of which are free. If your trash service offers free recycling, your only contribution is time. Spend time rinsing recyclable plastics and glass and putting them in the appropriate bins to do your part.

#10: Make your own cleaning products.

It's amazing what salt, vinegar, and lemon can do to your home. Before you invest in costly and chemical-packed cleaning products, look for ways to make your own. Check out [these non-toxic recipes](#) that replicate home cleaning products.

#11: Repaint your home with no or low VOC paint.

When it comes to remodeling, it's amazing what a fresh coat of paint can do. Still, you should strive to choose a paint brand that doesn't have VOCs – dangerous solvents that release into the air as paint dries. Choose a low or no-VOC paint to preserve the environment and your health.

#12: Start a compost pile in your backyard.

It's possible to start a compost pile no matter where you live. Even apartment dwellers in NYC can start a tiny, [in-home compost bin](#) with some earthworms. With a little more space, you can invest in an outdoor bin capable of turning all your food waste into reusable matter.

#13: Carpool to work.

While hitching a ride to work may seem like a hassle, there are plenty of ways to make this work. Websites like [eRideShare.com](#) and [CarpoolWorld.com](#) make it easy to connect with others who want to share rides and save money.

#14: Buy a gas-efficient or hybrid vehicle.

If you're hauling your family around in a giant SUV, you could save money – and the planet – by switching to a gas-efficient or hybrid vehicle once you're ready. Thanks to higher fuel-efficiency requirements for newer cars, trading into an Earth-friendly ride is more affordable than ever.

#15: Save and reuse water.

If you waste water in the shower or your kitchen, you can attempt to save water overages and use them in your home garden. At the very least, invest in a rainwater barrel and use water runoff to water your indoor and outdoor plants.

#16: Turn off the faucet when you brush your teeth or wash dishes.

If you sing "Happy Birthday" while you brush your teeth, you could be wasting gallons of water every day. Make sure to turn the faucet off while you brush your teeth or scrub the dishes. Any water waste you can prevent will add up fast.

#17: Use reusable towels instead of paper.

While paper towels and napkins are convenient, you can reduce paper waste by using cloth napkins and towels instead. Instead of using disposables, keep a bag for used cloth napkins in your laundry room so you can throw them in the washer each time you launder towels.

#18: Abolish disposables in your home.

You can buy nearly anything in disposable form, but that doesn't mean you should. Over time, all the plastic silverware, plates, towels, and cups add huge amounts of waste to our landfills. Instead of buying stuff you simply throw away, invest in plates, cups, and cookware you can use for a decade or more. And if you don't want to buy new, look for used cookware and dinnerware at garage sales or online resale sites.

#19: Turn the temperature on your water heater down.

Cranking the temperature on your water heater up requires cash and energy. To save money and cut down on your utility bills, turn the temperature down. You'll save money, but you may not even notice the difference.

#20: Grow your own vegetables.

Eating vegetables is great for your health and the environment. Unfortunately, much of the produce we consume is trucked or shipped in from distant environments, creating pollution and waste in the process. You can reduce your food footprint by growing some of your own food and consuming it yourself.

#21: Eat less meat

Meat is not only costly; it's bad for the environment. Research shows that animal agriculture plays a huge role in the depletion of our water resources and the increase of global warming. You can reduce animal-related pollution by avoiding meat or eating it sparingly.

#22: Use an insulated cooler to bring your lunch to work.

"Brown-bagging" it to work may sound nice, but you should try to avoid costly paper waste if you can. Instead of using disposables for your daily lunch, invest in an insulated cooler you can use for years.

#23: Bring reusable bags to the grocery store.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), only around 5 percent of the 1 trillion plastic bags used each year are recycled. You can avoid contributing to this problem by investing in reusable grocery bags and bringing your own.

#24: Sell or recycle used electronics.

Why throw away used electronics when you can give them a second life and make money in the process? Websites like [Gazelle.com](https://www.gazelle.com) make it easy to connect with buyers who want to purchase your used smartphones, tablets, and computers.

#25: Plant indoor and outdoor plants.

Plants filter the air, breathe in carbon dioxide, and breathe out clean oxygen we need to live. You can improve the look of your home and gardens and the environment by planting and caring for green plants of all kinds. If you don't want to buy plants, ask friends and neighbors for their clippings or extra seeds.

#26: Switch to low-flow showerheads.

Low-flow showerheads use a lot less water than their flow-heavy counterparts. If you want to conserve water and reduce your water bill over time, investing in an expensive low-flow showerhead is a smart move.

#27: Make homemade, healthy meals with few ingredients.

Processed foods require lots of labor and energy to make, use too much packaging, then require transportation to the store. You can avoid much of the environmental impact of processed foods by buying ingredients in bulk and making meals simple meals at home. As a bonus, homemade meals are almost always healthier.

#28: Wash clothes only when they are dirty.

While most of us are used to throwing all our barely worn clothes directly in the bin, you can save money and energy by washing clothes only when they're dirty. If you wear a shirt for a few hours, for example, consider hanging it back up for a second chance before you wash. The laundry you don't have to do can help you save money, energy, and time.

#29: Unplug appliances when not in use.

“Vampire appliances” suck energy from your sockets – even when they’re not in use. The best way to reduce energy bills and waste is to unplug items you’re not using. While some larger appliances may need to remain plugged all the time, it’s easy to unplug your toaster, curling iron, and other small electronics when not in use.

#30: Choose reusable diapers.

Disposable diapers add tons of waste to our landfills every year. And since they’re not biodegradable, the waste they leave behind will linger for thousands of years. You can cut down on this waste and save money by choosing cloth diapers instead. You’ll need to pay to launder cloth diapers, but the costs don’t come close to buying disposables for the first few years of a child’s life.

#31: Take a shower instead of a bath.

Taking a steamy, luxurious bath might seem dreamy, but the water you waste can add up quickly if you bathe often enough. To save water – and some cash – mix things up by taking some shorter showers in addition to baths.

#32: Bring your own coffee to work.

Stopping by Starbucks on your way to work is not just costly; it’s bad for the environment, too. Instead of purchasing a disposable cup of Joe every day, invest in an insulated mug and make your own coffee at home. You’ll save money and time, and keep paper products out of the trash.

#33: Shop at garage sales.

Every time you buy new home décor, gadgets, or clothing, you encourage manufacturers to produce more. Unfortunately, the production of consumer goods has ghastly effects on the environment, both in terms of energy usage and pollution. To stop the cycle, buy used products any time you can. When you buy used, you reduce waste and save money.

#34: Borrow tools and supplies when you need them.

Even if you use tools often, you can save money and waste by borrowing from friends and neighbors instead. If each of your friends invests in a few smart tools that complement each other instead of buying a full set, everyone could pool resources, save money, and save some much-needed space in their garage.

#35: Use power strips for televisions and entertainment systems.

If you have several electronics plugged in the same general area, you can save energy and money by plugging them into a power-saving strip. Each time you're not using them, turn the strip off and conserve energy. And when you're ready to watch television or listen to your stereo system, you can turn everything on with a single switch.

#36: Donate instead of throwing away.

If you get tired of your furniture, clothes, or household goods, don't throw them away. To save space in your local landfill, strive to make sure someone else doesn't want your used items. Post a free ad on craigslist.org, or mention your items on Freecycle.org.

#37: Eat leftovers.

According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](http://www.fao.org), approximately one third of the food produced for human consumption is wasted every year. To reduce waste, make sure to eat leftovers instead of throwing them away. Certain foods freeze well, while others can be saved and reheated for days.

#38: Add insulation to your attic, doors, and windows.

According to the [U.S. Department of Energy](http://www.energy.gov), you can reduce your home's heating and cooling costs by adding proper insulation to your home. Strive to add insulation to your attic especially, but also check windows and doors for proper caulking and air-sealing.

#39: Line dry your clothes.

Nothing smells better than laundry dried slowly in the summer sun. To save money, reduce energy usage, and create the best-smelling sheets ever, try line drying your clothes when weather permits.

#40: Skip makeup, or make your own.

Commercial makeup contains all kinds of chemicals that are absorbed by your skin. You can avoid nasty chemicals, save money, and do something creative by creating your own makeup hues – or skipping makeup altogether.

#41: Check out the library, or invest in a Kindle.

Buying new books is a pastime for many people, but the paper costs, shipping, and production of said books adds up quickly. To make your reading hobby as environmentally-friendly as possible, check out books from your local library when you can. Also consider investing in a Kindle so you can read new books guilt-free.