

Ten Ways to Green-ify Your Life

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Now, more than ever, it's important to pay attention to how you as a consumer are affecting the environment. There are many ways in which people have adversely changed the world, by destroying rain forests, harming crucial ecosystems, and burning holes in our atmosphere. But you can develop some easy daily routines that will eventually become habitual, and can help turn things around by doing your part.

1. **Participate in a recycling program.** Nowadays, it's so easy to do. Most communities make it easy, by offering roadside pick-up service, or recycling centers at local landfills. Think about the products you use, and the packaging that each product comes in. Most packaging can be recycled – look for the three small arrows with a number in the center. If there is no number, then that container cannot be recycled. Check out each container you buy while at the grocery store, and only buy those containers that have numbers on them.

Set up a system so that you can easily recycle the containers in your home. Place a couple of paper bags under the sink, or in another drawer in your kitchen that is handy. Use one paper bag for general recycling – plastics, glass, aluminum foil, tin cans – and use the other bag for paper products. Different towns vary, in terms of what they will accept in terms of recycling. Do some research to determine what your town accepts, and what they don't.

Pay particular attention to paper products. For example, you can recycle milk cartons, tissue boxes, toilet paper and paper towel rolls, cereal boxes, and cracker boxes, to name a few. Every time you throw something away, stop and think twice – can it be recycled? If so, take a couple of minutes to put it in the recycling bag.

2. **Avoid disposable items.** There are so many products out there that are disposable – diapers, towels, bibs, mops, dusters – the list just grows and grows. As a consumer, you have the power to help determine which products stay on the market, and which ones go by the wayside. Companies that offer these disposable products are doing the planet no good. Yes, they might be a little bit more convenient in the moment. But the convenience factor isn't enough to justify the amount of waste they produce by jamming up our landfills a whole lot quicker.
3. **Drive a car that is eco-friendly – preferably a hybrid.** But if your budget doesn't allow, then choose a small car that gives you greater mileage. You'll help the environment, as well as your budget. Also, you can make a big difference by paying attention to your driving habits. Do you really need to drive all the way across town for that particular item? Can you possibly use your bicycle, instead? Do you need to go a certain speed, or can you slow down? Be aware of where, and how fast, you drive, and try to make adjustments whenever you can.

4. **Use cloth bags at the grocery store.** There are lots of cloth bags available now, which are actually much easier to use than the paper or plastic varieties. The handles are sturdier, they carry more, can handle heavier loads, and you can easily toss them in with your regular wash, if need be. Some stores sell bags that are expressly made for cold and frozen items, keeping your groceries nice and chilly all the way home.
5. **Whenever possible, ride your bike or walk.** Vehicle emissions are one of the top culprits in environmental decay, so the less you drive, the better.
6. **Buy locally, as much as you can.** As well as helping to cut down on the amount of emissions released into the environment by transporting foods, buying local produce, meats, and dairy also supports your local farmers, and helps these small businesses grow - which is an important factor to consider these days. You'll notice that locally grown foods also taste much better and are better for you, because they are fresher.
7. **Be more aware of your habits at home.** Turn off the lights whenever you leave a room. Turn the water off while brushing your teeth, and only run it when you really need to. Turn down the heat when you're not at home. Think about the energy you use on a daily basis, and try to see if there are points where you can make a change, and a difference, in the amount of energy you expend.
8. **Start a compost pile.** Instead of throwing away those scraps from dinner, put them into a designated compost pile outside, tilling the soil until it becomes an effective fertilizer for your garden. Do a little research on composting to discover the best way for you to proceed, depending on your location and circumstances.
9. **Teach your children good "green" habits, from an early age.** They'll take these habits with them, right to their adulthood – and they'll be thankful to you for teaching them how to keep their world clean and healthy.
10. **Live by example.** Living well by example is always the best method of changing other people's opinions and outlook on life. By living "green," you'll be a great example, without having to speak a word.

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