



## Go Green

There is so much media coverage about global warming these days. We as Americans are responsible for 25% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions and we only make up 5% of the population! Here are eighteen simple steps to help us maintain the health of our planet.

If you aren't ready for a hybrid car or solar panels on your roof, but are willing to start on a smaller scale, here are the steps for you. Bear in mind that energy efficient choices can save you up to one third on your energy bill!

*Here's how to help without even trying...*

1) **Change the lights.** Try exchanging five standard light bulbs for five compact fluorescent bulbs. Fluorescent bulbs have greatly improved from the bulbs of old that cast everything and everyone in a green light. Studies show that if every family in America would switch just 5 bulbs, *it would cut electricity consumption by 66%.*<sup>1</sup> That is the equivalent of taking five million cars off the road! The bulbs cost more initially, but they last eight times longer than standard bulbs. In addition, they offer savings on your energy bill. A single bulb promises \$37. in savings (based on three hours of daily use.)

2) **Pull the plug.** Anything that is plugged into the wall draws energy. Even if it isn't turned on. So unplug appliances like your cell-phone charger, toaster and hair dryer when they're not in use. Chargers are big offenders. Only 5% of the energy is required to charge the phone, often the other 95% is wasted.

It's difficult to unplug all appliances, particularly programmable electronics, because you don't want to lose your settings. That's OK, just start with the easy ones.

3) **Notice packaging.** You've always heard, "Don't judge a book by its cover." I say, "Do judge a product by its packaging" Buying products that were designed to be disposable or have excess packaging, costs you more. You're literally throwing your money in the trash.

Choose products with the least packaging. Look for containers that are returnable, reusable or refillable. Here are a few examples:

- Buy a Brita water filter to filter your tap water instead of buying individual bottles. Carry your own water bottle, so you won't be tempted to buy one when you're out and about. Propel offers powder packets that can be added to your water, if you like your water flavored. This means you have less to carry out of the grocery store and less to recycle!
- Before you put the carton of milk or orange juice in the cart, weigh the options.

---

<sup>1</sup> Climate crisis. net

Consider purchasing the recyclable plastic jug or buying concentrate. Look for fruit in recyclable containers.

- Always check the number at the bottom of the package, some are recyclable and some aren't. Avoid numbers: 3, 6, and 7. They're not recyclable. I recently called regarding number 5, which is used for yogurt containers. It is **not** collected anywhere in my *county*. So be leery of the phrase, *recyclable but not collected curbside*.

4) **Reuse and Recycle.** Think of ways to reuse items. Reuse boxes and bags. Turn empty jars into containers for leftover food or to store a collection of rocks or buttons. If you have young kids, save egg cartons, envelopes and toilet paper tubes for craft projects.

Before you throw anything away, ask yourself if anyone else could use it. Offer everything from old magazines to office equipment to friends who might be interested. If you don't have any luck, try [www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org). It's an online service which connects you to a person looking for what you're trying to get rid of.

If no one wants it, could it be recycled? In our area we can check with [www.greenguardian.com](http://www.greenguardian.com) for places to recycle things that aren't picked up at the curb. In Minnesota it's now illegal to throw away computers or TV's because they have cathode ray tubes that will leak in the landfill. Certain items need special treatment. See the article: [REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE](#).

5) **Turn off your engines.** Idling your car for more than 10 seconds uses more gas than restarting the car. So turn the car off if you're waiting to pick up your kids. Or, if the line at the drive-through is long, park and go in.

6) **Bag it.** Carry a tote bag with you to the grocery store or the mall. Drop off your dry-cleaning in a garment bag. This will eliminate the need for the cleaner to return your clothes in another plastic bag. Don't take every bag that is offered. Return extra plastic bags to grocery stores that have collection bins. When you think of plastic bags, think reuse and refuse! If you'd like ideas on how to reuse plastic bags go to: [www.plasticbag.com/environmental/reuse.html](http://www.plasticbag.com/environmental/reuse.html)

7) **Support local organic farming.** The closer you live to your food source the better. Not only do organic foods taste better but they don't have the toxic chemicals. I have a vegetable garden and nothing tastes better than fresh vegetables! Buying locally reduces transportation time so the produce will be fresher and will have retained more nutrients. In addition, the farther your food travels, the more truck emissions are released into the air in delivering the product to you.

8) **Look for the energy star.** Next time you are ready to buy look for the Energy Star label. Energy Star is a government-backed program that helps people protect the environment by directing them to products with superior energy efficiency. "Results are already adding up. Americans, with the help of Energy Star, saved enough energy in 2005 alone to avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 23 million cars — all while saving \$12 billion on their utility bills"<sup>2</sup>

**Replace old appliances.** Old appliances use a lot more energy than newer models.

---

<sup>2</sup> [Energy Star's website](#)

Front loading washers use 50% less energy and one third less water. Refrigerators manufactured before 1993 can result in a \$140. electric bill per year. New Energy-star appliances could run on \$20! This saves you money and greatly reduces your consumption.

**9) Keep your appliances running efficiently.**

- Insulate your water heater.
- Vacuum the refrigerator coils.
- Don't leave the TV running all day. It increases stress and electric consumption and then leaves you with a higher bill.

**10) Make a donation.** Offset the amount of carbon dioxide that you put into the air by making a contribution to renewable energy. If you go to [www.climatecrisis.net](http://www.climatecrisis.net) or [www.terrapass.com](http://www.terrapass.com) you can calculate your emissions. Locally, you can contribute to Windsource, a green power program offered by Xcel. This supports wind-generated electricity. For as little as \$4. a month you can promote windpower and renewable energy in Minnesota. Look for information at [www.xcelenergy.com](http://www.xcelenergy.com)

*Taking it to the next level...*

**11) Lower water usage with these simple habit changes:**

- Sweep the walk instead of using the garden hose. *Savings: 80 gallons.*
- Turn the water off while brushing teeth. *Savings: 4.5 gallons.<sup>3</sup>*
- Run your washing machine and dishwasher only when they are full. *Savings: 1000 gallons a month.<sup>4</sup>*
- Add water filters or low flow shower heads. *Savings: 350lbs of carbon dioxide while saving up to \$150. a year.<sup>5</sup>*
- Time your showers. Keep it under 5 minutes and you could *save: 1000 gallons a month.*

**12) Watch your washing:**

- Wash clothes with cold water to lower energy consumption.
- Clean out the dryer lint filter. You gain three benefits. It takes 30% less energy to dry your clothes. You'll save about \$40. a year in energy cost and you'll reduce the risk of fire.<sup>6</sup>
- Don't wash your clothes as often. Use products like Tide-to-go to remove spots and spills.
- Pull clothes from the dryer before the end of the cycle. It saves energy and keeps your clothes from shrinking or needing a press.

**13) Entertaining tips:**

- Styrofoam cups can't be recycled. Try one of these options, starting with the simplest:
  - \*Set a pen next to cups and have people write their names on the cup to eliminate confusion about whose cup is whose.
  - \* Use durable coffee mugs.
  - \*Buy inexpensive plastic glasses and wash them.
  - \*Rent glassware for parties.

---

<sup>3</sup> MSN Real Estate

<sup>4</sup> Water Use it wisely.com

<sup>5</sup> Greenopia.com

<sup>6</sup> Eartheasy.com

- Buy 100% recycled napkins. Seventh Generation and Whole Foods' 365 make them.
- Look for corn plastic utensils. They're biodegradable, but a little hard to find.
- Use cloth napkins or towels.
- When eating out- bring a container to the restaurant for your leftovers.

**14) Watch the thermostat.** Nearly 50% of your energy bill is due to heating and cooling. Adjust it by a degree or two. In the winter, I lower the house temperature and heat my office with a space heater. Change your furnace air filters regularly. Keep shades pulled in summer. Use ceiling fans instead of air conditioning.

**15) Have an energy audit.** This will help you see where all of that energy is escaping to. The auditor will offer a step-by-step plan to increase your energy efficiency. They will advise you to caulk or weather strip your windows and doors or add insulation to your attic. Ultimately this will save money on your utility bill.

**16) Buy a plant or plant a tree.** A single tree will absorb one ton of carbon dioxide over its lifetime. Plus shade reduces air conditioning use by 10-15%.<sup>7</sup> Indoor plants clean the air and kill toxins.

**17) Flex-car.** If you don't drive everyday, look into this popular car sharing program. There is a Zip Car service here in Minneapolis: [www.zipcar.com](http://www.zipcar.com). Flexcar is available in several other major cities. [www.flexcar.com](http://www.flexcar.com)

**18) Keep the cycle going.** Recycle and then **buy** recycled products. Look for greeting cards that are printed on recycled paper. Buy 100% recycled paper napkins. Stock up on recycled copy paper, banker boxes and other storage options that reuse 50-90% post-consumer waste. Look for more ideas at [www.thegreenoffice.com](http://www.thegreenoffice.com)

Copyright ©2007 Come2Order



Karen Henke is the owner of Come2Order in Minneapolis, MN. Visit [www.come2order2day.com](http://www.come2order2day.com) and request a *free* Time-Savers Kit which is loaded with time-saving tips and services. *And* sign up for a subscription to the *free* monthly newsletter.

---

<sup>7</sup> Climate crisis.net