

Being a Better Earth-Steward

Tip #1 – Replace your incandescent light bulbs *which get more than three hours of use per week* with compact fluorescent bulbs.

Compact fluorescent bulbs use much less energy than traditional incandescent light bulbs. A lot of the energy for an incandescent bulb goes into producing heat. Some people say to replace *all* of your light bulbs with compact fluorescents. However, in a couple of years, there will probably be a new light bulb on the market known as a “LED” (Light-Emitting Diode). These LED lights use far less electricity than the compact fluorescent bulbs and last longer. Right now LEDs are extremely expensive and the light from them is not very good. Therefore, I recommend that, for now, you replace your incandescent bulbs which get a lot of use: the greatest savings, but requiring the least expense and use of Earth’s limited resources.

Tip #2 - Dry your clothes outside rather than using a clothes dryer.

Compare a clothes dryer and a clothesline: How much energy and Earth’s resources did it take to create each of these? How much gas and/or electric energy does it take to operate each of these? What does it cost to purchase a clothes dryer, compared to the cost of a clothesline and necessary hardware?

When I moved into my house, it had a clothes dryer but no place to hang up clothes outside. So one of the first things I did was look around the back yard to find two existing wooden structures to attach a line to. Then I went to a local hardware store and purchased a clothes line (plastic with wire inside), two large metal eyehooks (it looks like a 1” ring with a screw on one end), two snap clips (similar to what is on the end of a dog leash), and a bag of clothespins. I drilled a pilot hole in the side of the shed and another on the side of the gazebo and screwed in the metal eyehooks. Finally, I tied the line to one eyehook, clipped it onto the shed and stretched the line across the yard, where I tied it to the other clip, which I had attached onto the eyehook on the gazebo. Voila! I had a clothesline, which could be easily put up when needed. The best part? It paid for itself within two months and has continued to operate for over six years *using absolutely NO ENERGY!* After six months of not using my clothes dryer, I stored it in the shed. The next year I gave it away. Here in Arizona, I’ve found that wash can dry outdoors in as little as 20 minutes! Over the past years, there have only been one or two days a year when I have wanted to do laundry but the weather wasn’t conducive to drying clothes outdoors. But, after all, how many rainy days do we have here in Phoenix?

I realize that some people may live in an apartment, condo, or in a neighborhood where strict homeowner association regulations prohibit hanging laundry outside. But for those of you where it is possible to do this, it is a great way to save, money, the environment and enjoy the outdoors!

Tip #3 – Achieve comfortable temperatures by regulating air and sunlight coming into the house and by wearing appropriate clothing.

We want to allow as much heat as possible into our homes during the heating season and keep the heat out during the cooling season. We also want to try and produce as little heat and humidity in the house during the hot months. Some ways to help stay cool during warmer weather:

- use awnings and shade cloth to keep the sun off of your windows and outside walls
- close curtains and blinds when you are not home; when home, keep them closed on the sunny side.

- Open windows, where possible to do so safely, to allow cool air in at night (on nights when it is cooler outside than in the house); close windows and doors tightly when it is hotter outside. Be careful to close up as soon as it is warmer outside than in the house. A breeze coming in the windows may feel good, but if it is warmer air, it will eventually heat up the house.
- If you have an evaporative cooler, use the “fan only” setting at night to bring in cool air; Use an indoor/outdoor thermometer or a thermometer indoors and one placed outdoors in the shade to be able to tell the actual temperatures.
- Move your activities to rooms on the cooler side of the house
- Wear cooler clothing
- Prepare cold meals, such as salads or cool summer soups
- Cook outside using a sun oven
- Shower outside
- Use a fan on the “low” setting in the room you are in to create a gentle breeze
- Use less lights; switch to compact fluorescent bulbs

Trick Question: If you let a fan run for several hours in a room, and there was no other influence on the temperature, would the actual room temperature (a) get cooler; (b) get warmer; or (c) remain the same?

Answer: The actual room temperature will (b) get warmer. Fans make us feel cooler because the air movement they cause helps the moisture on our skin to evaporate more quickly. Remember how cold you feel if there’s a breeze when you get out of the pool? A fan on “low” or “medium” in the room we’re in will help us feel cooler and allow us to not have the air conditioner set as cool or perhaps make the air conditioner unnecessary. Therefore, it will save energy. However, a fan will not actually *lower* the room temperature. For that reason, don’t leave fans on when you’re not in the room. In addition to using electricity unnecessarily, the fan motor generates a small amount of heat and can increase the actual room temperature.

Tip #4 – Fast from using your car one day each month – or one day each week! Take the bus, carpool, walk or stay at home. Be creative in how you get around or in what you do that day. Make it a spiritual day of reflection and reconnecting with neighbors. April 22, is Earth Day, a perfect day to do something special to honor Mother Earth.

Some things to do without using your car:

- catch up with things at home, such as gardening, cleaning, arts and crafts
- get to know your neighbors
- walk to a local store
- walk just for exercise
- call family or friends
- call someone who is ill or unable to get out
- pray, meditate, write, sketch, paint
- most of all: be creative and have fun!

Tip #5 –Take your own reusable cloth or canvas bags with you to the store when you go shopping and keep the paper and plastic ones out of the landfill. “Paper or Plastic?” Neither, thank you! I brought my own cloth bags.”

Did you know that the plastic bags NEVER decompose? They only break down into smaller pieces of plastic.

I put my cloth bags on the checkout conveyer belt, in front of the food. Otherwise, many cashiers may start putting the items in plastic bags before you can get their attention.

Tip #6 – Are there “vampires” in your house constantly draining electricity? Unplug appliances, such as certain radios, televisions, cell phone chargers, printers, etc., whose transformers are using electricity even when the appliance is off.

A transformer changes the household electricity from AC (Alternating Current) to DC (Direct Current), which many appliances use. A sure clue that an appliance has a transformer, which is constantly on, is if there is a square or rectangular “box”, measuring approximately 1” by 2”, attached to the plug. Some transformers are internal, though, making them difficult to spot. Other appliances, such as newer televisions, are always in “ready mode” so that they come on more quickly. But the downside is wasted energy.

Some of the “vampires”, such as the transformer for the doorbell as well as the one on the sprinkler control, need to be left on. Others, such as the television, computer printer and some radios could be easily controlled by plugging them into a power strip and turning the switch “off” when not in use. This will also protect the appliance from power surges.

How many vampires can you find in your house?

Tip #7 – Sell or give away things you no longer use. When looking for items you need, check first at yard sales or thrift shops. Tell your friends what you’re looking for. They may see a used one for sale somewhere or may have one they’re happy to give you.

This is another form of “recycling” which helps keep items out of the landfills and saves us from having to use more of our planet’s limited resources to produce new items.

In addition to yard sales and thrift shops, check out resources on the internet, such as the yahoo group known as freecyclephoenix which allows you to look for or give away free items.

If you really want to make a commitment, checkout the yahoo group known as “thecomcompact”, a group of individuals committed to not buying anything new for an entire year. They agree to (1)Not buy new products of any kind (from stores, web sites, etc., and to (2)Borrow, barter, or buy used.

To find these groups on the internet, go to groups.yahoo.com and type the group name in the search box.

Tip #8 –If you must use your car, maintain it in good working condition and drive economically. Accelerate gradually, tires properly inflated, engine working well, no extra weight, windows closed on the highway. Meanwhile, continue to find creative and fun ways to do without your car: car pool, take the bus, or work and play at home. Patronize your neighborhood stores and get to know your neighbors; call a distant relative – or someone from church.

The best solution to the energy problem is not better cars, but a change of lifestyle. Even if we had a car which required no fossil fuel, it still would take oil to produce the tires and

build and maintain the roads. Think “small town.” Use the energy crunch as an opportunity to build local community.

Some other energy-saving car tips:

- if you car pool with one other person, you cut your fuel usage by about 50%.
- If you have two vehicles, leave the thirstier one at home.
- Public transportation saves fuel and money and also decreases congestion, which saves everyone fuel.
- Remove unnecessary items – or people – from your car. More weight = more fuel
- Go easy on the accelerator. Jackrabbit starts use a lot more fuel.
- Most vehicles are most efficient when cruising in their top gear at a relatively low speed. For example, a car is most efficient in 5th gear at 40 to 55 mph. Wind resistance increases exponentially with speed.
- Keep the tires inflated properly (get the proper inflation pressure from the sticker on your car’s doorjamb or the owner’s manual, not the tire’s sidewall.)
- Maintain your engine in good working condition; change the oil regularly.
- Air conditioning or Open Windows? There isn’t a simple answer. If your car has been sitting in the sun and is hotter than the outside air, drive for a few minutes with the windows open to cool it off. Then, if you’re hitting the highway, close the windows and turn on the A/C. Aerodynamics are more important at high speeds, so if you’re not exceeding 35 or 40 mph, open windows won’t make as much difference. It also depends on the vehicle. The same applies to convertibles; you’ll burn less fuel with the top up.
- Keep all your cargo inside the car, rather than using roof-top carriers
- If your car calls for regular gasoline, there’s no reason to run it on higher octane.

Tip #9 –Find natural ways to clean, deodorize, disinfect, launder and polish without harming yourself or the environment. For a great all-purpose cleaner, try combining 1/8 c borax, 1/8 c washing soda, 1tbl Vegetable-oil-based liquid soap, ¼ c vinegar, 2 gal. hot water. Because washing soda is slightly caustic, use gloves if the solution will come in contact with your skin. Rinse well.

Most of the commercial cleaning solutions are highly caustic, not only to the environment, but remain on the surfaces and in the air of our homes long after we are finished using them. How often have you read the warning label on a bottle telling you to only use in a “well ventilated” area?

There are many books in print and a lot of information on the internet about making your own cleaning solutions which don’t harm the environment and which are safe to breathe. The cleaning solution recipe above came from a book called “Clean & Green, the Complete Guide to Nontoxic and Environmentally Safe Housekeeping” by Annie Berthold-Bond. Some of the natural ingredients she uses are:

- Baking Soda: Odor absorbing, deodorizing, mild abrasive. Use as scouring powder.
- Borax: Disinfects, deodorizes, inhibits mold growth.
- Salt: An effective non-scratching abrasive cleaner with bacteria inhibiting qualities.
- Sodium Percarbonate: A natural bleach for white items.
- Washing Soda: Cuts grease, cleans petroleum oils, cleans dirt (slightly caustic)

- Grapefruit seed extract: antifungal and antibacterial
- Vegetable-Oil-Based Liquid Soaps: primarily coconut oil based soaps that biodegrade quickly. Mostly found in health food stores.
- Vinegar: cleans windows, use a tablespoon in the laundry rinse cycle

Tip #10 – Reduce the junk mail and catalogs coming to your house.

Did you know that more than 17 billion catalogs were distributed in the United States in 2001 - that's more than sixty-four for every man, woman, and child. Not surprisingly, this requires a lot of paper, the fourth most energy-intensive of all manufacturing industries and one of the most polluting. The average American uses over 700 pounds of paper per year. The good news is we've got some simple steps for you to take to greatly reduce that number.

If we successfully reduced the number of catalogs produced in this country by 30% we would:

- preserve 16.6 billion gallons of water each year = the amount of water used by 172,333 households.*
- conserve over 100 barrels of oil
- keep 3.5 million tons of CO2 out of the atmosphere = the amount of CO2 produced by 570,000 cars driven 200 miles/ week annually.* □ *Figures from The Alliance for Environmental Innovation
(www.environmentaldefense.org/alliance/catalogs_tips.html)

Listed below are three actions you can take to lessen the mail you receive. Take a look at the list and do what you can. Remember, every action counts.

Stop Those Unwanted Catalogs! Now, with the internet, we can do most of our mail order shopping online. Stack your unwanted catalogs in a pile and spend ten minutes a week calling to request that your name be removed from their mailing list.

Receive Less Junk Mail! Send a short letter to: DMA Mail Preference Service, P.O. Box 643, Carmel, NY 10512. You can read more about this at DMAConsumers.org. You need to include \$1. List your name, in all its infinite variations, and request that all of these names be removed from their national database. This removal lasts five years, so keep this address handy. For more information contact the DMA at 212-768-7277.

Keep Your Catalogs and Magazines out of the Landfill! Many municipalities don't accept catalogs as part of their recycling program so find a second home for them. Keep them out of the landfill by dropping them off at a local hospital, assisted living home, senior residence facility or school (they use them for art classes and other projects). It's the next best thing.

(Tip #10 Information courtesy of www.campaignearth.org)

Tip #11 – Some ways to save water in your bathroom:

- Turn off the water while you brush your teeth (save 4 gallons a minute)
- Install a low-flow shower-head (save 500 gallons a week)
- a shower head with a shut-off valve to turn off the water while you lather up with save even more!
- Fix a leaky faucet (save approx. 140 gallons a week)

- Check your toilet tank for leaks (save 600 gallons a month). Any easy way to do this is to put food coloring into your toilet tank. If it seeps into the toilet bowl, you have a leak.
- If your toilet is the older standard-water-use kind, replace it with a low-water-use one.

Tip #12 – Buy locally grown fruits and vegetables whenever possible. Check out the Phoenix Downtown Public Market, open year-round, rain or shine; Wednesdays 4-8 p.m., Saturdays 8 a.m. to Noon. It's located at 721 N. Central, SE Corner of Central Ave. and McKinley St. (2 blocks S of Roosevelt). <http://www.foodconnect.org/phoenixmarket/>

Tip #13 – Skip the Bottled Water

Use a water filter to purify tap water instead of buying bottled water. Not only is bottled water expensive, but it generates large amounts of container waste. Bring a reusable water bottle, preferably aluminum rather than plastic, with you when traveling or at work. Check out this short article for the latest in bottled water trends: <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5475>

Tip #14 – Green Your Workout

Use your muscles en route. Instead of driving to the gym, walk, jog or bike there. If it's too far, drive part of the way and finish the trip under your own power. Improve your fitness by parking farther and farther away each time.

BYOB. Bring your own water bottle and fill it at the tap.

Share your soles. Recycle your used athletic shoes, or donate them to a clothing drive. Nike's "Reuse-A-Shoe program" (<http://letmeplay.com/reuseashoe>) turns old shoes into new courts.

Take short showers. Just because it's not your water bill doesn't mean it's not our water.

Speak up. Encourage your gym's management to take measures to reduce waste, such as turning off lights in vacant rooms, shutting off the sauna/steam room/hot tub at night, minimizing use of the heater and air conditioner, and installing recycling bins.

Tip #15 – Cook with the Sun!

Solar ovens are portable, easy to cook in and require no electricity! Best of all, you don't heat up your kitchen. They're perfect for camping, family reunions, outdoor events and even in your own backyard.

A fellow enthusiast, Jean Eisenhower has written a great article about solar cooking and how solar ovens are designed to hold in all the heat they gain and by necessity also hold in moisture. "So, rice stays moist, meat stays juicy, and pizza crust doesn't dry out but instead bakes to a chewy, soft perfection." (Kinda gets the ol' taste buds going.) Jean's article is timed well as we in the northern hemisphere move into the summer season and look for ways to avoid heating up the kitchen. Go to

<http://www.yourguidetogreen.com/learn/articles/index.php?article=Solar-Inspiration> and see the article of the week on "Solar Inspiration." Bon Appetite!

Your Guide To Green offers a great deal on solar ovens, and with free shipping too! Go to http://www.yourguidetogreen.com/shop/products/SunOven_Solar_Oven_with_Free_Shipping-24-38.html for more info or to place your order.