



Resource
Conservation



© ADOBE STOCK

10 Ways to Lessen Your Impact

With the environmental problems we all face — climate change, stronger storms, greenhouse gases, pollution — it can seem overwhelming. But if we all pitch in by doing little things every day, it can add up to make a real difference. Here are 10 ways you can reduce your impact on the environment.

1. Avoid single-use items. Bring a reusable water bottle or tumbler when you work or run errands. If you eat takeout regularly, bring reusable forks or spoons (or even sporks!) with you to eat with. Eschew plastic or paper straws for silicone or metal reusable ones.

2. Choose items with less packaging. Buy brands that don't use lots of plastic or paper packaging. Even better? Select brands that use reusable options like glass spray bottles that can be refilled.

3. Use reusable grocery bags. Instead of taking the store's paper or plastic bags, bring your own totes from home. Some stores may even give you a discount for doing so.

4. Shop local, in-season produce. It's better for you, cheaper and doesn't have to travel as far to get to market, meaning less fuel used to transport and keep it cool.

5. Reuse old T-shirts and towels. Cut them into pieces and viola, cleaning

cloths for days.

6. Buy in bulk. Avoid making smaller purchases in multiple packaging. Instead, buy in bulk and separate it into smaller quantities in your own reusable containers.

7. Print only what you need. Use both sides and, if you can, print only in black and white. If you can't print both sides, recycle the paper for scratch work or taking notes.

8. Use cloth napkins. Instead of

paper ones that will be thrown away. Instead, use cloth and wash them.

9. Wash in cold water and hang to dry. Do your laundry in cold water, if you can, and then hang it to dry when weather allows. Keeping your dryer from running will also save on your electricity bill.

10. Use rain barrels. If you garden, instead of turning on the tap to water your plants, put in some rain barrels to collect rainwater to use in the garden.

Driving Smarter

It's no surprise to anyone with a commute that we spend a lot of fuel and time on the road. The good news is that there are ways to reduce your impact even if you're going to spend a lot of time in the car. Keep reading to learn how to do it.



© ADOBE STOCK

CHOOSE A FUEL EFFICIENT CAR

The first thing to do is to look at your lifestyle. What kinds of things do you need your vehicle to do? If you regularly tow a boat or you need to pack up a whole soccer team, a small two-door car probably isn't for you. The good news is that hybrid and alternative energy vehicles are available in a variety of sizes now, including larger SUVs.

If a hybrid isn't in the cards for you — say you need a pickup truck — choose a model with an engine that has the max fuel efficiency for

what you need. Some lines even cut off some of the cylinders to use less fuel when you don't need that much power.

CONSIDER ENGINE SIZE

Most vehicles come in four-cylinder, six-cylinder or eight cylinders. Some models will go as high as 10 or 12 cylinders. Generally speaking, a four-cylinder car will be more efficient than one with more cylinders, except in certain situations, such as when you're pulling a heavy load or in mountainous terrain. Fuel efficiency will also depend on

the size of your vehicle and whether or not you have a turbocharger. A four-cylinder engine with a turbocharger or under a heavy load will be less efficient than a six-cylinder in the same circumstances.

FUEL ECONOMY AND EPA RATINGS

The Environmental Protection Agency rates cars based on city and highway mileage. City driving means driving in urban areas where the traffic is stop-and-go. Think rush hour traffic. Highway driving means driving on the inter-

state or in rural areas, like long road trips.

The EPA arrives at these numbers by placing the car on a dynamometer, a machine that measures data from the vehicle on a flat platform with rollers under the vehicle wheels. It runs through standardized testing routines for city and highway driving. As the vehicle runs, a hose connected to the tailpipe collects exhaust data to figure out how much fuel is being burned.

Remember, these ratings are estimates and for comparison purposes only. Your mileage may vary.

Planting with Native Landscaping

Native landscaping is a garden or yard full of plants that are native to your area.

Not only are these plants better for native pollinators, they're also more accustomed to the environment, meaning they require less pampering — no fertilizer, pesticides, less watering and other things that can harm the environment or use precious resources.

HOW TO FIND NATIVE PLANTS

When we're talking about native plants, we don't necessarily mean wild plants. You can find in just about any wooded area wild planets that are not native, originally brought to the area by humans and now growing free. Even if these plants do well, they're not native and could possibly cause harm to the plants and animals that are native to the area.

Now that we've established that native and wild plants are different, there are also different kinds of native.

There's plants native to your country, native to your region, native to your state and — the one you probably haven't considered — native to your ecosystem. Plants native to your ecosystem means that the plants grow in your area and on the type of ground you have. For instance, some trees may grow in Florida, but not all Florida trees with grown in a swamp. The criti-



© ADOBE STOCK

cal part is to tick both boxes.

HOW TO PLANT NATIVE

The first thing you should do when it comes to any planting is to know your USDA growing zone. Once you've got that, you know what plants will do best in your area. Next, look around your yard. Take note of what

kind of soil you have and what your sun exposure is. You'll need to know both things before you head out to the nursery.

Next, think about what you want your garden to do. Do you want a shady spot to relax with a book? Lots of flowers you can cut and decorate with? Grow fruits and vegeta-

bles for your family to enjoy? If you can, take the time to sketch out your ideas on a sheet of paper. Make sure to measure your spaces carefully.

PINPOINT SOME PLANTS

There are many resources you can turn to for help finding native plants. Any local

nursery, garden club or botanic gardens should be able to give you a hand. Some things to consider are the maximum size each plant will get, especially for trees, and if you need to augment your soil to make the plants happy. Generally, native landscaping means less maintenance, but not no maintenance.

Saving our Oceans

The world's vast seas are some of the last unexplored areas on our planet. They are endlessly and surprisingly diverse, full creatures from the largest on earth to the smallest. Unfortunately, the world's oceans are also full of lots of trash and other pollutants. Here are a few things you can do to help save our seas.

1. Conserve water. The water we use is fresh and the water in the ocean is salty. So how does using less water help the ocean? It's not that we're pulling out water, it's that we're putting in. The more water we use (and send down the line as wastewater), the more of that now-polluted wastewater ends up in our oceans.

2. Reduce pollutants. Choose nontoxic chemicals for your household use and try to dispose of herbicides, pesticides and cleaning products properly. Meaning: Don't pour them down the drain.

3. Recycle instead of throwing it away. Putting less trash in the can means less trash to end up in the ocean. When you recycle, follow your community's rules on separating



© ADOBE STOCK

and cleaning to make sure your recycling ends up where it's supposed to.

4. Shop smarter. If you're buying seafood, make sure it's sustainably sourced. Local is better. Use reusable bags to cut down on the amount of plastic in the world and in the oceans.

5. Drive less. The less you

drive, the less greenhouse gases there are. If you can, car-pool or take public transportation.

6. Use less energy. Turn your thermostat up or down, depending on the season. Select energy efficient bulbs that use less electricity. Using less electricity, gas and other

natural resources means less strain on the world's oceans.

7. Enjoy the ocean responsibly. Don't litter at the beach. If you're boating, anchor in sandy areas far from coral reefs and sea grass. Follow no wake rules and never dump anything overboard. In some coral-rich areas, be aware

there may be restrictions on the type of sunscreens you can use. Gone fishing? Practice catch-and-release and never keep species you aren't supposed to.

8. Volunteer. If you live in or visit a coastal community, look for beach cleanups and other volunteer efforts you can join.



© ADOBE STOCK

Home Energy Audits 101

A home energy audit or assessment evaluates your home's and your family's energy usage to help you understand where you could improve.

It gives you a complete picture of your usage and your expenditures on energy. It's the first step on improving your house's energy usage and possibly lowering your monthly bills.

THE AUDITOR

Home energy audits are conducted by professionals who use specialized equipment such as blower doors, infrared cameras and tracer gas. Auditors go room by room inside your house and out, looking at all the ways it and your family use energy. Sometimes, audits are provided free

of charge by your utility provider, or your local government may provide an audit for free.

If your utilities or government doesn't offer free audits, ask friends and family for recommendations or check out the Residential Energy Services Network, recommended by the federal Department of Energy. The department says that, typically, home energy audits cost between \$300-\$500, but the costs may be reduced by subsidies or if you hire the company to make improvements to your home. Before you hire a company, ask for

references and contact them all, making sure they were satisfied with the work done. Check in with the Better Business Bureau for any complaints. Lastly, ask if their equipment is appropriately calibrated for use in your home.

PREPARING FOR AN AUDIT

Before the auditor arrives, make a list of any existing problems you know of. Look for things like condensation in the windows and drafty rooms. Also gather up your last year of energy bills or provide a summary for the

auditor to look at. The assessor may ask some questions. Some examples are:

- Is anyone home during the day?
- What's your average thermostat setting?
- How many people live here?
- Do you use every room?

Feel free to walk your home and property with the auditor and ask questions as you go.

AUDITS FIND SAVINGS

Making the efficiency upgrades cited in your home energy audit can save between 5-30% on your energy bills, the Department of Energy says. It also ensures your home is a safe and healthy place for your family.

Protecting Endangered Species

There are thousands of species that we're in danger of losing forever.

Most of these animals and plants are being pushed to the brink by human activities, such as habitat loss, poaching and invasive species. Many countries have laws that protect and endangered species in their borders. In the U.S., it's the Endangered Species Act.

ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT OF 1973

President Richard Nixon signed the ESA into law on Dec. 28, 1973. It prevents extinction and helps recover species to the point where they are no longer endangered. The law covers both the species and the supporting ecosystem and limits activities like hunting, clearing land and polluting protected areas.

As of 2019, 54 species have recovered to the point where they can be removed from the list. These include the bald eagle, gray wolf, gray whale, key deer and the black-footed ferret.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

The first step is to learn about endangered species in your area. Where do they live? What do they eat? Why are they threatened? Learn how human activities affect these animals and where they live. Reduce your footprint on that environment by recycling, supporting conservation efforts, driving less and volunteering for habitat clean-ups.

You can also visit wildlife refuges, parks and open spaces. Wildlife recreation, such as birdwatching, creates millions of jobs and supports local businesses, which gets the community involved in preserving these species. Leave no trace in these places; pick up



© ADOBE STOCK



© ADOBE STOCK

all your litter, keep your vehicle on marked roads and don't touch or damage the environment if you can help it. Never touch or disturb wild creatures or their homes.

Wildlife isn't just in faraway woods, either. You can make your home and yard more wildlife friendly by planting native plants. Also lock up your garbage

to keep marauding critters out of your garbage, which can harm them. Place decals on your windows to deter bird collisions into your windows to protect the feathered friends in your yard. Keep your gardens pesticide and herbicide free. These chemicals can also harm the wildlife that call your lawns and gardens home.



© ADOBE STOCK



© ADOBE STOCK

Reduce Your Energy Usage

Cutting your utility and fuel bills isn't just good for your wallet, it's also good for the environment.

By using less electricity, water, gas and other resources, you're giving the Earth a chance to recover from centuries of abuse at the hands of humans. Here are 17 ways you can cut your energy usage right now.

1. Turn off unnecessary lights in your home. Get in the habit of turning off a light when you leave the room.
2. Use natural light when you can

instead of light bulbs.

3. Take shorter showers. A hot shower uses both water and energy to heat it.

4. Turn off the water while you're shaving, washing your hands and brushing your teeth. It may seem like just a few seconds, but those seconds add up.

5. Unplug unused electronics. Many devices have lights that stay on even if you're not using it. These lights run up your bill and your energy usage.

6. Adjust the thermostat when you're not home. Remember, too much of a difference will cause your

system to work extra hard, so keep the changes moderate.

7. Reduce heat in the kitchen. On very hot days, consider grilling outside rather than adding more heat to your home.

8. Run full loads in the washer, dryer and dishwasher.

9. Wash your laundry in cold water.

10. Hang that cold-water wash up to dry outside. Let the sun and breezes do the work for you for free.

11. Don't leave the refrigerator door open while you're browsing for a snack.

12. Instead of using the oven, try cooking with your microwave, slow

cooker or toaster if you can.

13. Switch out older light bulbs for LED lights, which are much more energy efficient.

14. When it comes time to replace an appliance, choose Energy Star appliances, which are proven to be more efficient than non-certified models.

15. Turn down the thermostat on your water heater. This can also keep your family safe from scalds.

16. Weatherize your home by sealing air leaks and drafts around doors and windows.

17. Replace your home's insulation with a more efficient product.