

Green Earth



Clean Up the Neighborhood

If you notice your community has a lot of litter, a neighborhood cleanup can have a significant impact on your local environment while building relationships with your neighbors.

The Environmental Protection Agency says mis-managed trash travels throughout the world's rivers and oceans, and can also harm terrestrial wildlife and habitats.

Before organizing a community cleanup, you should find an area that people frequent for recreation or one that animals rely on. A few good places to investigate are public parks, neighborhood lakes and campgrounds. Perform a walk-through to find the locations that require the most intervention, then begin planning an event.

MAKE IT PUBLIC

Modern technology allows us to reach a mass audience with little effort. Take advantage of your social media following or community pages to express your concern about pollution in your area. You can also talk to municipal to discuss raising awareness to your neighbors and encouraging everyone to participate. For instance, they may display a flyer for your peers to view or send a letter in the mail



© ADOBE STOCK

announcing the details.

STOCK UP ON SUPPLIES

Cleaning up trash requires adequate supplies to ensure volunteers are safe. Consider asking for donations for items like gloves, respirators and different colored trash bags to

separate recyclables. When procuring supplies, reach out to local officials. They may have a surplus of safety equipment they can donate.

DISPOSE OF TRASH PROPERLY

Depending on the size of the

cleanup, you may be left with a lot of garbage to dispose of afterward. Remember to separate trash from reusable materials as you move toward a cleaner neighborhood. It's good practice to notify your local waste management facility to explain your intentions

and arrange a pick-up time and date.

In many cases, the facility has programs designed to sponsor these events for no charge. However, if your local branch requires payment for pickup, you can factor the expense in as you fundraise.



Learn to Sustain Materials

© ADOBE STOCK

Sustainable material management is a systemic approach to using products to the extent of its life cycle.

The Environmental Protection Agency encourages Americans to learn how to get more use out of products we regularly use in our daily lives.

FOOD

You may not think that disposing of the leftovers in your fridge does much harm to the environment. However, the United States Department of

Agriculture found that American consumers waste about 225–290 pounds of food each year. Wasted food accounts for at least 19 percent of landfill waste, which is a significant producer of greenhouse gases.

When we discard food to the garbage can, we are also wasting the fossil fuels required to transport the food and causing environmental damage from commercial shipping. The next time you are cleaning your refrigerator, the EPA encourages us to reuse the food in these ways:

- Donate to food banks or homeless shelters.
- Turn it into animal food.

- Use it as compost to promote benefits when growing fruits or vegetables.

ELECTRONICS

The electronic devices we rely on are created with materials like oil, iron, platinum and copper. The mining, production and transportation of these elements produce greenhouse gases, pollution and drain our natural resources. Disposing of these electronics appropriately is of the utmost importance.

Before simply throwing away inoperable cellphones or laptops, look for community drop-off points where the items will be recycled responsibly. If

you are unable to find these programs in your area, contact the manufacturer. You may be able to ship them back for free.

CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

Whether you are a contractor by trade or a weekend renovator, discarded construction materials must be disposed of properly. Within the United States alone, the EPA reports that billions of tons of concrete, steel and wallboard will be required to build and maintain our homes and businesses. Reusing these limited materials is crucial to continued global availability.

Save the Earth, Save Money

During your hectic schedule, it may be difficult to concern yourself with the state of the environment.

However, one thing that is likely on your mind is saving money, creating an emergency budget and ensuring your financial stability. Did you know you can do your part to promote a green Earth while saving money at the same time?

INVEST IN REUSABLE WATER BOTTLES

If you consume water throughout the day, consider choosing reusable cups rather than disposable bottles. According to the Container Recycling Institute, more than 60 million plastic water bottles are thrown away every day. Some make it into the recycling bin, but most wind up as litter or in landfills. Save money by limiting your reliance on plastic bottles at the grocery store and fill your reusable cup with a source of fresh tap water. Also consider purchasing reusable coffee mugs.

DRIVE LESS

Limiting your time in the vehicle promotes incredible environmental benefits as pollution and the use of fossil fuels are reduced. By committing to driving less and traveling by bicycle or on foot,

you save money by lessening your reliance on gasoline, costly maintenance intervals and repairs. If you live in an area where full walkability is possible, getting rid of the vehicle altogether will eliminate car payments, insurance premiums and parking fees.

STOP WASTING ENERGY

According to the Alliance to Save Energy, Americans spend about \$2,200 annually for their utility bills. A portion of this energy can be saved by being responsible for your energy use and limiting the amount of electricity you waste.

- Turn the lights off before leaving a room.
- Update your lamps to efficient LED or CFL bulbs.
- Don't operate dishwashers or laundry machines without a full load.
- Invest in a programmable thermostat to cut down on heating and air usage when you're not home.

For more ways to save money and limit your energy usage, invest in efficient appliances branded with the Energy Star logo, or install solar panels to assist in electricity production.





© ADOBE STOCK

Use Appliances Responsibly

The usage of home appliances can have a substantial impact on the environment.

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the use of fossil fuels like coal, oil and natural gas creates air and water pollution while causing damage to public health. While you probably cannot eliminate appliances from your life altogether, using them responsibly can promote greener Earth benefits.

The first factor you should consider is to upgrade your equipment to

energy efficient models. These newer machines operate with less energy, but they can save you money on your utility bills.

DISPOSING OF OLD APPLIANCES

After updating your home's inventory with new appliances, the big question is how you will get rid of your old machines. In many cases, you can arrange the delivery and pickup of discarded units from the home improvement store where you made your purchase. However, if that is not an option, the Environmental Protection Agency recommends these tips to dispose of your outdated mod-

els properly.

- Participate in curbside pick-up programs or clean-up days offered by your local government.
- Deliver your appliances to suitable recyclable facilities where they will be scrapped for reusable materials.

The EPA estimates that nearly 9 million refrigerators, 6 million window air conditioner units and almost 1 million humidifiers are disposed of each year.

WAYS TO LIMIT YOUR NEED FOR APPLIANCES

While the machines in your home offer incredible convenience, limit

their usage when you can. For instance, washing a few dishes by hand can conserve more water than using the dishwasher without a full load.

You can also avoid operating the dryer on nice days by hanging outfits on a clothesline to dry. Pay attention to the forecast and schedule your laundry chores around warm weather to limit your reliance on this machine.

You can also make your washer more environmentally friendly by only using it if you have a full load. When possible, operate the machine on the coldest setting to preserve the energy it requires to heat the water.

Living Green for Your Health

Choosing to live a life that improves the Earth can also present unique health benefits for your body.

Commit to lowering your carbon footprint by avoiding the car and traveling by bicycle or on foot for beneficial cardiovascular exercise.

Even small changes in your lifestyle can create significant benefits for both your health and the environment. Simply changing the way you tidy up your home and committing to stop using cleaners with harmful chemicals can improve your personal space and limit the risks of respiratory problems or skin irritation.

Check out some other easy ways to boost your health while helping preserve the Earth.

GARDENING BENEFITS

Planting a small garden in your backyard can alleviate your need for shopping for produce at a chain grocery store. A study conducted by the Environmental Working Group reveals that more than 70% of mass-produced fruits and vegetables in the United States contain pesticide residue.

Pesticides are known to the National Institutes of Health to contaminate soil, water and other vegetation. It can also be toxic to wildlife like birds, fish and beneficial insects. A



© ADOBE STOCK

garden is beneficial to doing your part when eliminating the need for these dangerous chemicals to support your healthy diet.

Gardening can also introduce exercise through planting, pulling weeds and harvesting your produce. The American Heart Association suggests participating in mod-

erate-intensity physical activity for at least 150 minutes per week for cardiovascular benefits.

BUY LOCAL

If you're unable to fit gardening into your hectic schedule, you can help eliminate your need for cross-country shipping of produce by buying

locally harvested fruits, vegetables and meat. Local suppliers are much more likely to raise their foods organically, which reduces pesticides and pollution caused by mass production.

Produce stands and locally operated farms will also limit the number of miles your food travels, which can reduce pol-

lution by commercial shipping methods like trucks or ships.

According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, processed food in the United States travels more than 1,300 miles, and fresh produce travels more than 1,500 miles before it reaches your plate.

Go Green in the Office

Whether you are in an entry-level or leadership position in your office, take control of a campaign to introduce a greener operation.

Depending on the size of a staff, the way you get to work can be the first place to incorporate more environmentally friendly behavior. Discuss a way that your peers or employees can lessen their carbon footprint by ridesharing or taking public transportation to work.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, a typical passenger vehicle emits about 4.6 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year. Transportation makes up about 30% of greenhouse gas emissions that have severe consequences on our environment. The United States output of these dangerous gases has increased by 1.3% since 1990.

After you encourage your co-workers to participate in cleaner modes of transportation, consider these tips from the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials to promote a green space within the office.

RECYCLING

To motivate yourself and peers to enhance recycling efforts in the workplace, share these statistics from the EPA about the benefits it creates.



© ADOBE STOCK

- It reduces the amount of waste sent to landfills and incinerators.

- It prevents pollution by reducing the need to collect new raw materials.

- It helps create jobs in the recycling and manufacturing industries throughout the United States.

Throughout the workplace, position recycling bins in

high-traffic areas like conference areas and break rooms. Make sure to use different containers to separate materials like paper, plastic and aluminum.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Your office likely relies on electronics to operate efficiently. Check copiers and printers for eco-friendly settings that

can place them in standby mode when not in use. Many devices feature opportunities to set sleep timers or energy-saving mode during long periods of inactivity.

MEETING PLANNING

When setting up meetings that will draw in co-workers from different locations, consider hiring a shuttle service to

reduce emissions from separate vehicles. If you'll offer water for attendees, avoid providing plastic bottles. Use pitchers and fresh tap water instead.

If meals are catered in, consider donating the leftovers to a local food bank. Not only will this help feed the hungry, but it avoids the waste of food to the landfill.

If most of the lighting in and around your home is traditional incandescent, you should become aware of the cost and energy savings created by upgrading to energy-efficient bulbs.

According to the United States Department of Energy, replacing five of your property's most used light fixtures with Energy Star models can save \$75 per year.

To find an energy-efficient light source, check the box for the Energy Star logo. You can also determine efficiency by searching for bulbs labeled halogen incandescent, compact fluorescent lamps or LED. The DOE provides these statistics to encourage homeowners to begin a greener life at home.

Efficient lighting uses about 25-80% less energy than traditional incandescent.

Upgraded bulbs can last 3-25 times longer than outdated bulbs.

SMART LIGHTING

A 2019 report from market research firm Research and Markets projects that the global smart lighting market size will reach an estimated \$38.68 billion by 2026.

What is smart lighting? It ensures energy efficiency and includes automated controls and highly efficient fixtures. These controls can adjust depending on conditions, such as occupancy and external lighting, giving your home new lighting functions that can decrease your bill and enhance



Upgrade Your Lighting

your overall lighting efficiency.

INTERIOR UPDATES

The DOE estimates that an average household dedicates about 5% of its energy budget to lighting. New illumination standards took place in 2012 to help limit the amount of electricity required to illuminate your space.

When updating your home

with LED or CFL bulbs, consider investing in a dimmable option. You can conserve energy when using the lights at lower levels. Of course, you may need to update the fixture that will power the lamps as some equipment may not support a dimming feature.

EXTERIOR UPDATES

Outside lighting is essential

for the safety and security of your family home. You can consider equipping exterior lights with either CFL or LED bulbs to preserve energy. It's also good practice to protect these lamps from outdoor hazards and weather with enclosed fixtures. If you decide to forego protective housing, make sure the lights you choose are built to withstand

rain.

You can choose either fixed-lighting systems or for extra security, equip motion-sensor lighting to illuminate your space when movement is detected. If you're using light for outdoor decorative purposes, consider investing in solar-powered setups to eliminate the need for electricity.