



## TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR HOME & LIFE GREENER

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The following are suggestions for operating, maintaining and improving your home, as well as living your life, more sustainably. Following these tips will help to reduce energy and water usage, reduce adverse health risks, reduce resource depletion, reduce carbon emissions and/or save money.

### 1. Sustainable Home Operations

#### a. Reduce Energy Use

- **Unused Equipment:** use a power strip (not a separate receptacle) for home electronics – including TVs, VCRs, DVD players, cable TV boxes, computers, printers, video game consoles, microwave ovens and AC adapters for cell phones, digital cameras and other electronics - and turn it off when the equipment is not in use
- **Green Power:** purchase green power – electricity generated by rapidly renewable resources like solar power, wind turbines, geothermal systems and biomass – to power your home from your local utility company
- **Off Peak:** use electricity during off-peak hours
- **Thermostat:** set it comfortably low in the winter and comfortably high in the summer
- **Dish Washing:** run your dishwasher when it's full; use a short cycle; use the air-dry setting instead of the drying cycle
- **Clothes Drying:** hang clothes out to dry; if using a dryer, clean out the lint filter before running it, and use the moisture sensor feature (if available)
- **Clothes Washing:** use cold or colder water rather than hot water
- **Air Conditioning:** keep shades closed when running the air conditioner; run the fan alone first, then switch the cooling on; experiment with temperature settings to create a comfortable (not refrigerator-like) environment; close vents in rooms not frequently occupied
- **Cooking:** use the microwave instead of the oven when you can
- **Lighting:** turn off the lights in any room you're not using; use task lighting instead of lighting an entire room; use compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), instead of incandescent bulbs, in your lights
- **Hot Water Heating:** set the thermostat to 120 degrees F
- **Windows & Doors:** in cold climates, close your curtains and shades at night and open them during the day; in warm climates, close south- and west-facing white curtains during the day



## TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR HOME & LIFE GREENER (cont.)

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### b. Reduce Water Use

- **Cleansing:** don't run the water while you're brushing your teeth or shaving; take short showers; take showers instead of baths
- **Dish Washing:** run dishwasher when it's full, rather than hand washing; use a short cycle; if dishes need pre-rinsing, fill a bowl with water or wet a sponge rather than continually running the water
- **Clothes Washing:** run only full loads
- **Landscaping:** use native, drought-resistant plants and grasses; keep your lawn small; use efficient irrigation, and mulch (to slow erosion and evaporation); group together plants with similar watering needs

### c. Reduce Adverse Health Effects

- **Cleaning:** use non-toxic, environmentally safe, biodegradable cleaning products, including laundry products
- **Fragrance-Free:** don't pollute your indoor air or mask odors that could alert you to a problem; choose fragrance-free products

## 2. Sustainable Home Maintenance & Improvements

### a. Reduce Energy Use

- **Energy Audit:** hire a trained and certified energy auditor to undertake an evaluation of your home to determine where energy is being lost and how efficiently current heating and cooling systems and appliances are operating, and to provide recommendations for improving energy efficiency and comfort
- **Air Sealing & Insulation:** follow the recommendations provided in your energy audit, which will likely include: sealing around windows and doors, where the roof joins the structure of the home and where the home sits on its foundation, adding insulation to the attic and insulating ductwork, pipes and the hot water storage tank
- **Windows & Doors:** caulk and weather-strip exterior doors and windows; choose double pane, over single pane, windows; for existing single panes, install storm windows, and caulk and weather strip, or replace; use a storm door with your exterior door
- **Lighting:** consider installing timers, photocells or occupancy sensors; if you use incandescent bulbs, install a dimmer
- **Thermostat:** install a programmable thermostat and program it properly



## TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR HOME & LIFE GREENER (cont.)

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### a. Reduce Energy Use (cont.)

- **Hot Water Heating:** choose an Energy Star approved tankless hot water heater; insulate at least the first 6 feet of pipe from the water tank; consider installing a hot water recirculation loop to the master bath
- **HVAC:** get a system check up every 2 years; check filters monthly, especially during heavy use months (winter and summer); if it looks dirty, clean or change it; at a minimum, change it every 3 months
- **Roof:** choose a light colored material for roof
- **Landscaping:** remove debris from around the outdoor components of your heating and cooling system(s); plant trees for shade & wind protection
- **Clothes Washer:** select an Energy Star approved front loader
- **Clothes Dryer:** choose an Energy Star approved gas model; periodically check the vent to ensure it's not blocked
- **Air Conditioner:** choose high-efficiency air handler and condenser units
- **Refrigerator:** choose an Energy Star approved refrigerator with a top or bottom freezer and without an icemaker or water dispenser in the door
- **Oven:** choose an Energy Star approved gas oven with an electric ignition

### b. Reduce Water Use

- **Low Flow Fixtures:** install a faucet aerator; choose a low-flow or dual flush toilet; for pre-1994 models, adjust the float valve to admit less water
- **Leaks:** repair leaky faucets and running toilets
- **Clothes Washer:** select an Energy Star approved front loader
- **Rain Barrels:** install on gutters and use the water for plants

### c. Improve Health & Reduce Resource Consumption

- **Low VOCs:** use low VOC paints and cleaning products
- **Rapidly Renewable Materials:** consider using environmentally preferable and rapidly renewable products
- **Gardening:** avoid, limit and/or don't overapply pesticides; use electric lawn equipment
- **CO:** install carbon monoxide testers



## TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR HOME & LIFE GREENER (cont.)

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### 3. Sustainable Lifestyle Choices

#### a. Recycle

- **Recycling Bins:** set aside bins in your home to separate and collect recyclable materials, including newspapers, white paper, clear and colored glass, plastic water and milk bottles, aluminum, cardboard, batteries and fluorescent light bulbs
- **Compost:** set aside your yard and kitchen wastes - in a pile in a convenient spot on the ground or in a bin - which will decompose into an earthy, dark, crumbly substance that is excellent for adding to houseplants or enriching garden soil
- **Electronics:** many computers, monitors, cell phones and other electronics include toxic materials that should not sit in landfills; many retailers and other companies will take your old gadgets for recycling; also, the Environmental Protection Agency can help you find local electronics recyclers

#### b. Choose Greener Personal Practices

- **Local Goods:** buy locally produced items, including produce and other goods; buying local reduces the consumption of valuable natural resources
- **Reusable Bags:** instead of using grocery stores' disposable plastic or paper bags, bring your own reusable tote bags, which are available for sale at many grocers and other retailers; the bags are sturdier than disposable bags, making the trip home easier, and they don't waste resources or end up in landfills; if you must use disposable bags, ask your bagger to avoid double-bagging whenever possible, and re-use or recycle them
- **Avoid Bottled Water:** drink water from the tap or use a pitcher with a purifier, to reduce bottled water use
- **Green Development:** urge your school district to construct new green schools and undertake green renovations of existing schools for your children; advocate for appropriate green building codes and regulations in your community
- **Investing:** switch to socially responsible investing
- **Workplace:** urge your workplace to implement environmentally responsible purchasing policies, improve the indoor environment, and reduce energy use



## TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR HOME & LIFE GREENER (cont.)

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### c. Reduce Transportation Impacts

- **Fuel-Efficient Vehicles:** consider buying a highly fuel-efficient vehicle, a hybrid vehicle, or an alternative fuel vehicle to save money at the gas pump and help the environment
- **Drive Less:** carpool, use public transportation, walk or bike when possible
- **Reduce Commuting:** urge your workplace to create a ride share program and to support telecommuting
- **Driving Tips:** follow these tips to improve gas consumption:
  - Warm up your vehicle by driving it, rather than idling. No more than 30 seconds of idling on winter days is needed.
  - Avoid aggressive driving (speeding, rapid acceleration, and hard braking) to improve gas mileage.
  - Avoid high speeds; [www.fueleconomy.gov](http://www.fueleconomy.gov) shows how driving speed affects gas mileage.
  - Use overdrive gearing, to reduce your car's engine speed, which saves gas and reduces wear.
  - Use cruise control on the highway to help you maintain a constant speed and, in most cases, save gas.
  - Use air conditioning only when necessary.
  - Clear out your car; extra weight decreases gas mileage.
  - Reduce drag by placing items inside the car or trunk rather than on roof racks.
- **Car Maintenance Tips:** follow these tips to improve gas consumption:
  - Use the grade of motor oil recommended by your car's manufacturer.
  - Keep tires properly inflated and aligned.
  - Get regular engine tune-ups and car maintenance checks to look for worn spark plugs, dragging brakes, low transmission fluid, or transmission problems.
  - Replace clogged air filters to improve gas mileage by as much as 10% and protect your engine.
  - Combine errands into one trip.