



# Home & Environment

## Going Green

### Living an Environmentally Responsible Life

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In today's society, "green" is used to describe everything from household cleaners to cars. It's the topic of talk shows, books, and political campaigns, but what does "green" really mean? Simply put, "green" is environmental responsibility. Adopting a green lifestyle means making deliberate choices to lighten our impact on the natural world.

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- Save Energy at Home
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#### Why go green?

We, as humans, are dependent on Earth's natural resources. We breathe the air, we drink the water, we use energy for transportation and conveniences, and we till the soil to produce our food. Understanding how our daily choices affect our environment is vital. As consumers, we have many options available to us to meet our needs. When someone chooses to adopt a green lifestyle, they are making deliberate consumer choices to lighten their impact on our natural resources. They drive less, conserve water, recycle, and buy local products.

This publication offers simple suggestions to "green up" your lifestyle, listed by category. Look at your lifestyle one category at a time. Making changes in small steps will help you permanently adopt these green practices.

#### Save Energy at Home

##### General

- Place furniture, such as reading chairs, desks, and sewing machines, in areas that allow you to take advantage of daylighting.

Daylighting is the practice of using windows and skylights to bring natural lighting into your home, thereby reducing the need for artificial lighting. Make sure furniture and window treatments do not block air vents.

- When repainting a room, consider a light color for walls. Lighter colors minimize the need for artificial lighting.





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Solar heat gain can be decreased by up to 65 percent on south-facing windows and 77 percent on west-facing windows during summer months by using window awnings.

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- Use window treatments, such as curtains, blinds, shades, or interior shutters. In winter months, open curtains and shades during the day to allow the warmth of the sun in, and close during the night to prevent heat loss. In summer months, close curtains on south- and west-facing windows during the day to keep heat out. During warmer months, consider white shades, drapes, or blinds, as they will reflect heat away from the house.
- Use throws. Throw blankets not only accent your home décor but can help keep you warm during cooler months without adjusting your thermostat.
- Use area rugs on tile, wood, or laminate floors for added insulation.
- Install glass fireplace doors to reduce drafts and conditioned air loss.
- Use a circulating fan, such as a ceiling fan, table fan, or floor fan. During summer months, ceiling fans allow you to increase your thermostat by around 4°F while maintaining the same level of comfort. However, when you leave the room, turn off your ceiling fan. Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms, by producing a wind-chill effect.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs. CFLs use approximately one-fourth the energy used by traditional incandescent light bulbs.
- Turn off lights, televisions, computers, and other electrical devices when not in use to decrease energy consumption.

## Bedroom

- Use multiple layers of bedding during colder months.

## Kitchen

- Use manual appliances when possible, such as can opener or mixer.
- When boiling water, use a covered pan.
- Use a small electric pan or toaster oven rather than a large stove or oven for small meals and snacks.
- Check the temperature of refrigerators and freezers to make sure temperatures are within the recommended ranges and are not too cold.
- When cooking, do not remove lids or open oven doors unnecessarily.
- Only run the dishwasher with a full load. Use the automatic air-dry switch if possible or allow your dishes to air-dry.

## Laundry

- Read the manufacturer's instructions for your washer and dryer. Some cycles may use less energy. Run the clothes washer and dryer only when you have a full load. Clean the lint trap/filter after each use. Consider using a clothesline or drying rack in warmer months.
- Take advantage of a heated dryer, do two or more loads in a row.
- Re-wear clothes whenever possible.
- Use good laundering techniques. Pre-treat stains, sort clothes, and follow product recommendations to avoid rewashing or re-rinsing.
- Use cold water whenever possible.



The WaterSense program is sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to promote products that are water-efficient and high-performing, such as toilets, showerheads, faucets, and faucet accessories. The WaterSense label indicates a water-efficient product that is independently certified to perform as well as or better than standard models. WaterSense-labeled products can be found at home improvement stores. For more information, visit the WaterSense website at [www.epa.gov/watersense/](http://www.epa.gov/watersense/).

## Equipment, Appliances, and Electronics

- Unplug appliances when not in use, including chargers for cell phones and other small electronics. Using power strips can make it easy to turn off multiple devices at once. In the average home, 75 percent of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off.
- Purchase appliances or electronic products that have been awarded the ENERGY STAR seal.



ENERGY STAR is a program sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy. When you see the ENERGY STAR logo on a product you know that it is energy-efficient. The ENERGY STAR logo can be found on a wide variety of products including appliances, computers and electronics, heating and cooling equipment, lighting and fans, and even plumbing equipment. For more information about ENERGY STAR, visit their website at <http://www.energystar.gov/>.

- Avoid sitting TVs and lamps near thermostats. The air-conditioning thermostat senses heat from these appliances and may run longer than needed.
- Turn your thermostat up or down in accordance with the seasons. In the winter, try lowering the temperature of your home two or more degrees while you are not at home or sleeping. In the summer, use ceiling fans to help cool your home, and turn the thermostat up a degree or two.



- Invest in a programmable thermostat and program it correctly to take the guesswork out of temperature control.
- Keep filters on heating/cooling units clean and choose pleated filters to help units run efficiently.

### On the Road

- Maintain your car by changing the oil and air filter regularly.
- Keep your tires properly inflated.
- Choose to purchase a fuel-efficient or flexible fuel vehicle.
- Reduce miles driven by carpooling and combining trips for errands.
- Avoid needless vehicle idling. If you plan to be parked for longer than 10 seconds, turn your engine off.
- Drive sensibly to improve your gas mileage. Speeding, rapid acceleration, and hard braking can lower your highway gas mileage by 33 percent and your city mileage by 5 percent.

### Conserve Water at Home Bathroom

- Turn the water off when brushing your teeth, washing your hands or face, or shaving.
- When shaving, fill the basin with water and dip your razor in the basin as needed.

- Check your toilet and faucet(s) for leaks. Replace old (prior to 1993) toilets with new WaterSense labeled toilets.
- Flush the toilet only when necessary. Do not use the toilet as a wastebasket. Throw tissues, insects, and other trash in the garbage, not the toilet.
- When taking a bath, plug the drain before turning on the faucet. As the tub fills adjust the temperature.
- Use less than 5 inches of water when taking a bath.
- Install low-flow showerheads and aerators to restrict the flow of water.
- While waiting for water to get warm when taking a shower, catch water in a pitcher or bucket, and use to water plants.
- Limit showers to three to four minutes.

### Low-Flow Showerheads

#### Aerating vs. Non-aerating

An aerating low-flow showerhead mixes air into the water stream maintaining a steady pressure providing an even, full shower spray. However, the temperature of the water may cool down slightly towards the floor of the shower since air is mixed with the water. A non-aerating low-flow showerhead does not mix air into the water stream, rather the water flow pulses, providing a strong, massaging type spray that maintains temperature.

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Letting your faucet run for 5 minutes uses about as much energy as letting a 60-watt lightbulb run for 14 hours. - *WaterSense*

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## Kitchen

- Dispose of fruit and vegetable scraps in a compost pile instead of a kitchen garbage disposal. Garbage disposals use a lot of water and can create septic problems.
- Thaw meat and other frozen foods in the refrigerator or use the defrost setting on your microwave instead of using running water.
- Scrape, rather than rinse, dishes before putting into the dishwasher.
- Set your dishwasher to the water saving or short cycle (check manufacturer's instructions). Only run the dishwasher with a full load.
- Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator for drinking instead of waiting for the tap water to get cold.
- Cook food in as little water as possible to save water and prevent nutrient loss.
- While waiting for the tap water to get warm, catch the water in the sink or a pitcher and use for cleaning vegetables, washing or rinsing dishes, watering plants, or cleaning.
- Repair leaky faucets.
- Don't wash or rinse dishes under a running faucet. Instead use a pan or sink of water.

## Laundry

- Wash full loads of clothes. However, if you must wash smaller loads adjust the water-level control to the appropriate setting.
- Check your washer's hoses for cracks and leaks regularly.

## Equipment and Appliances

- Read the manufacturer's instructions for your appliances. Clothes washing machines and dishwashers often have cycles that use less water.

- When replacing an old appliance or product, look for a new, higher efficiency ENERGY STAR or WaterSense product. Visit [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov) or <http://www.epa.gov/watersense> for information on stores in your area.
- Install low-flow toilets, showerheads, and faucets. Visit <http://www.epa.gov/watersense> for information on low-flow products.
- Insulate your water heater tank and hot water pipes.
- Lower the temperature on your water heater. A savings of 3 to 5 percent in energy costs can be seen for each 10°F reduction in water temperature.
- If you plan to be traveling for three or more days, adjust the thermostat on your water heater to the lowest setting or turn off the water heater. (Check manufacturer's instructions first.)

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On average, water heating accounts for 12 percent of home utility bills and is the third largest home energy expense. For more information on water heating, including insulating water heater storage tanks and hot water pipes, visit the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Savers' website at [http://www.energysavers.gov/your\\_home/water\\_heating/](http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/water_heating/).

## Outdoors

### General

- When giving your pet(s) fresh water, use the old water for plants.
- For outdoor play, use a small pool instead of a hose or sprinkler.
- Check hoses and spigots for leaks regularly.
- Clean sidewalks, patios, and driveways with a broom instead of a hose.

- Install a rain barrel to collect rainwater to use on your lawn or garden.
- Instead of hand washing vehicles, use a commercial carwash that recycles water.
- Repair leaks around pool or spa pumps. Install a pool or spa cover to reduce evaporation.
- When using a water hose, use a hose nozzle to turn off the water when you are not using it.

### **Landscape and Garden Areas**

- To avoid water loss to evaporation, water your plants early in the morning.
- Weed your garden regularly to eliminate competition for water.
- Mulch plants, shrubs, and trees to retain moisture. Leaves and lawn clippings can be used as an alternative to purchasing mulch.
- In your garden, group vegetables that need more water together to allow for more efficient watering.
- Replace high water-use plants with native or drought-tolerant plants. Native plants are adapted to local conditions and can survive seasonal temperature extremes, such as periods of drought.
- When purchasing an irrigation system, investigate which system is best for you and your lawn and



garden needs. Micro-irrigation systems for gardens, trees, and shrubs irrigate slowly and decrease evaporation, runoff, and overspray. Only irrigate the areas of the lawn that need watering.

- Take into account soil type, sun or shade exposure, and the type of sprinkler when planning irrigation.
- Inspect irrigation equipment once a month for leaks, broken or clogged heads, or other problems.
- Reduce over-watering by decreasing each irrigation cycle by two minutes and eliminating one entire irrigation cycle per week. Adjust sprinklers to eliminate overspray on sidewalks, driveways, and other impervious surfaces.
- Invest in a rain shutoff switch that turns off your irrigation system in wet weather.
- Raise the mowing height of your lawn mower to promote root growth and hydration and decrease heat stress.

## **Reduce Waste**

### **General**

- Think before you print. Use both sides of paper for printing, copying, and taking notes.
- Email documents and messages when possible.
- Pay bills online if possible.
- Recycle printer and toner cartridges. Check with local clubs, schools, and organizations that may collect these items for fundraisers.
- Recycle items such as aluminum cans, plastic bottles, glass jars, newspaper, junk mail, and cardboard if possible. Contact your County Solid Waste Coordinator for information on recycling programs in your community or visit <http://waste.ky.gov/>.

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If you can push a  
screwdriver into your lawn  
easily, your grass does not  
need to be watered.

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In 2009, the United States generated 13 million tons of plastics as containers and packaging, and only 7 percent of the total plastic waste generated was recovered for recycling. Do your part to reduce, reuse, and recycle. (From <http://www.epa.gov/waste/conservation/materials/plastics.htm>.)

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- When in need of furniture, restore what you already have or shop at second-hand stores.
- Use reusable bags when shopping. Bring your own reusable travel mug or water bottle.
- Compost using an indoor worm bin or outdoor pile/bin.
- Remove your home's address from direct/junk mailings.
- Purchase items that use less packaging. Buy items that are used frequently in bulk, and look for items that are sold in reusable or recycled containers.
- "Close the loop" by purchasing items made of recycled materials.

### **Kitchen**

- Use reusable cups, plates, and utensils.
- Use travel mugs instead of disposable coffee cups.
- Avoid eating out. Eating out, especially fast food, can create a lot of waste from packaging. Instead pack a snack or meal. If possible, use local produce and products.

### **Equipment and Appliances**

- Repair equipment when possible instead of buying new.
- If applicable, donate unwanted equipment and furniture to a local charity, such as Goodwill. Auction used equipment and furniture as a fundraising event.
- Recycle electronic waste (e-scrap). Contact your County Solid Waste Coordinator regarding e-scrap recycling programs in your community or visit <http://waste.ky.gov/RLA/recycling/Pages/ElectronicsRecycling.aspx>.

## **Eat Responsibly**

- Plant a garden and produce some of your own food. Avoid pesticides by companion planting and use compost for fertilizer.
- Buy food from local growers and utilize farmer's markets. Look for the Kentucky Proud label.



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Kentucky Proud is a program of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and promotes buying locally grown or processed foods and products.

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- Look for sustainably produced items in your local grocery store, and ask managers to stock these items.

## **Act Locally**

- Volunteer in your community to get a recycling program started or organize a trash clean-up event.
- Plant trees on your property, or work with a local school to plant trees.
- Be a resource for your community. Set a good example for your neighbors, and be ready to answer questions. Direct them to the local Cooperative Extension office.

For more information about going green, visit the See Blue Go Green website at <http://www.ca.uky.edu/gogreen/>.

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