

## **You are the change! Easy steps to reducing your impact on the environment and shrinking your carbon footprint.**

### **Practice a low carbon lifestyle in your home.**

Americans are responsible for 23.7% of the world's total energy consumption, though we make up only about 4% of the global population.<sup>1</sup> All that energy we are gobbling up creates harmful greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. For too long, most Americans have been oblivious to their role in causing climate change. The power to slow climate change starts with you. Each time you run the dishwasher, flip a lightswitch, buy a pair of socks or do one of the thousands of things that require the input of energy and use of earth's natural resources, think about what might lessen the impact of your actions. You may feel that any change you make in your personal habits will be insignificant in the grand scheme of things, but this is not so. Climate change is the result of billions of individual actions burning fossil fuels and contributing to the destruction of the environment (directly or indirectly through the global economy). Thus, the power to slow, even stop, climate change comes from those billions of individuals—and you are one of them.

The following list of tips is just to get you started on lowering your carbon footprint—you'll soon discover countless actions. These aren't too hard to adopt, and don't worry if you have occasional lapses of careless energy consumption. The important thing is that you try to change the way you think about and use energy. Take stock of what you have done, and come up with your own climate-friendly lifestyle practices.

- **Reduce your solid waste consumption.** We live in an extremely wasteful society—we love disposable products, and love to wrap these products in excess packaging. Purchase products that use less packaging and that you can use time and again. For example, use reusable kitchenware instead of disposable plates and glasses when you have company over. Show off your plates, whether they match or not, and don't be shy about your eclectic mix of glasses. Everyone will be able to tell which glass is theirs, and you will cut down on the amount of solid waste generated by your dinner party.
- **Compost and recycle.**
- **Stop junk mail—an environmental hazard and personal nuisance.** Each year, more than 100 million trees are destroyed to produce junk mail, about 28 billion gallons of water are wasted to produce and recycle junk, and the energy used to produce and dispose of junk mail exceeds energy required to run 2.8 million cars. Visit the following websites to remove your name from credit and catalog solicitation lists: [www.41pounds.org](http://www.41pounds.org), [www.newdream.org/junkmail](http://www.newdream.org/junkmail), [www.obviously.com/junkmail](http://www.obviously.com/junkmail), [www.stopthejunkmail.com](http://www.stopthejunkmail.com), [www.DirectMail.com/junkmail](http://www.DirectMail.com/junkmail)

- **Wash your clothes in cold water and run full loads.** For loads washed with hot water, 90% of the energy used goes to heating the water. By washing in cold water, your clothes will be just as clean and you will cut your carbon emissions by about 2 pounds per load.<sup>ii</sup>
- **Lower your thermostat.** Heating accounts for more than 25% of your energy bill, and most people overheat their homes. Set your thermostat to 68 degrees when you are at home during the day, and 55 degrees at night or when you are out. Wear a sweater! Consider installing a programmable thermostat to keep your home at the optimal temperatures.
- **Use natural cleaning products and processes and rediscover classic home remedies.** The average family uses 30 gallons of various chemical cleaners each year. These products require substantial amounts of energy to manufacture and inevitably find their way into our water, air, and soil.<sup>iii</sup> Make the switch to natural cleaning alternatives: Vinegar is a great all-purpose cleaner and lemon juice can remove soap scum and hard water deposits.. Search the web for more natural cleaning recipes.

## Transportation

- **Walk, bike, or telecommute.** Believe it or not, the average American drives 250 miles a week—learning how to reduce your vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is one of the most effective measures you can take to cut your carbon footprint<sup>iv</sup>.
- **Use public transportation.** The personal use of cars is the single most damaging consumer behavior and directly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. By using public transportation whenever possible, you will decrease your carbon footprint. Check out the Galloping Goose website for regional schedules:  
<http://www.town.telluride.co.us/home/index.asp?page=57>
- **Drive efficiently.** You can reduce your fuel consumption by 10-30% just by developing efficient driving behaviors, such as ridding your car of unnecessary weight, maintaining a steady fuel-efficient speed between 45-55 mph, decelerating and accelerating slowly, and avoiding routes that require you to idle in traffic.<sup>v</sup>
- **Tune your engine and change your air filters.** It's a no brainer—your car is more efficient when it is healthy.
- **Don't idle your car.** Contrary to popular belief, it actually requires more fuel to idle your car then to start it up again if you are stopped for more than 30 seconds. Consider this next time you are stopped for a construction projects.
- **Keep your tires pumped up.** According to the Pump 'Em Up campaign, if Americans kept their tires properly inflated the amount of oil saved would be equal to the amount estimated to exist in the Arctic National Wildlife refuge!<sup>vi</sup> Proper inflation will increase gas mileage and prolong the life of your tires.

## **Save water.**

Water brings life. Along with the sun and soil to grow food, it is our most precious resource. In the U.S., increased demand for water due to our growing population and thirsty lifestyle is putting stresses on our water resources and distribution systems. According to the EPA, the U.S. population nearly doubled between 1950 and 2000. But in that same period, public demand for water nearly tripled. Americans now use an average of 100 gallons of water each day—enough to fill 1,600 drinking glasses!

To put it simply, demand is increasing and supplies are shrinking. Water is now a national priority. By using water responsibly, you can do your part to preserve water supplies for future generations, protect the quality of our water supply and environment, and even save money.

It also requires a tremendous amount of energy to treat and deliver water to your home. Increased water efficiency means increased energy efficiency... and the less energy we use, the less we contribute to climate change. EPA's WaterSense reports that "if one out of every 100 American homes retrofitted with water-efficient fixtures, we could save about 100 million kWh of electricity per year—avoiding 80,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions. That is equivalent to removing nearly 15,000 automobiles from the road for one year!"

Here are some simple steps to saving water in your home:

- **Turn off water when brushing your teeth and shaving**—save over 8 gallons of water a day!
- **Water your lawn only when necessary and during the coolest parts of the day.** According to the EPA, more than 50 percent of landscape water use goes to waste due to evaporation or runoff caused by overwatering! Consider a drip irrigation system. Better yet, celebrate the beauty of plants native to our dry, mountainous climate!
- **Practice taking shorter showers,** and install a low-flow showerhead.
- **Only run the dishwasher when it is full** (same goes for washing machines), and be conscious of your water usage when washing by hand... consider quickly wetting dishes, turn off the water as you scrub each item, then rinse all at once.
- **A leaky toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water a day!** Repair all leaky toilets immediately. Ditto for leaky faucets—a leaky faucet can waste up to 3,000 gallons of water per year.
- **Consider installing a dual flush toilet for greater water efficiency.**

- **Retrofit your home with EPA’s WaterSense and Energy Star labeled products.** Switching to WaterSense labeled bathroom sink faucets or faucet accessories could save your family enough water annually to do 14 loads of laundry.
- **Stay away from bottled water.** Bottled water not only generates massive amounts of waste, but also encourages the privatization of water. For more on the implications of water privatization, visit <http://www.sierraclub.org/committees/cac/water/>

Save Water facts courtesy of the EPA’s WaterSense website: <http://www.epa.gov/watersense/index.htm>

## Take control of your home’s energy efficiency.

There are several ways to mitigate our home energy use—through conservation, efficiency and using renewable energy sources. Conservation requires that you make a concerted effort to change your energy use habits—it is behavioral. By practicing a low carbon lifestyle (link to above), you can reduce your overall energy use and, perhaps more importantly, become more sensitive to the complex relationships between energy usage, resource consumption, environmental degradation, and all that fun stuff. Efficiency, on the other hand, means improving our technological environment to maximize the desired outcome while minimizing cost, energy usage, and waste. More and more individuals are looking into providing some of their own power on site with renewable energy options.

- **Get an energy audit.** Your home is a complex working system. Unfortunately, most homes are not designed to maximize energy efficiency, and the result is often a leaky, inefficient system. It doesn’t help that most people know more about their microwave than their heating and cooling system, even though this is the biggest energy user in the home. A professional energy audit will not only help you identify cracks in the system and weed out hidden energy losses, but will also alert you to some of the actions you can take to use energy wisely.
- **Replace incandescent bulbs with CFLs or LEDs.** This is a super easy and effective way to start making your home more energy efficient. Though these lights cost a little bit more up front, they use about 70% less energy than incandescent bulbs and can last up to ten years. **CFL bulbs are most appropriate indoors where a light is generally left on for 15 minutes or more.**
  - According to the EPA, “If every American home replaced just one light bulb with an ENERGY STAR qualified bulb, we would save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes for a year, more than **\$600 million in annual energy costs**, and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than **800,000 cars.**”
- **Insulate your water heater.** Believe it or not, your water heater is responsible for about 20% of the carbon emissions of your home<sup>vii</sup>. Increase the heating efficiency of your

water heater by reducing its temperature to 120. Install an insulating blanket on older electric models. Better yet, consider a Solar or On Demand hot water system.

- **Curb your refrigerator's appetite.** Your refrigerator is the biggest energy hog appliance in your home. Make sure that it is running at its best by cleaning the coils and filters twice a year. When the filters are clogged the compressor uses up to 30% more energy<sup>viii</sup>.
- **Purchase Energy Star appliances.** Energy Star appliances use 10-50% less energy than standard appliances. Outfitting your home with Energy Star qualified appliances will save you money and reduce your annual energy usage.
- **Stop heating the outdoors.** During those cold winter months, warm air inside your home leaks outside through every nook and cranny. In fact, the cumulative effect of air leaks around the home is equal to the amount of heat lost by leaving an average sized window open all winter long!<sup>ix</sup> The first step to mitigating heat lost is by sealing, caulking, and weatherizing around doors, windows, electrical outlets, ducts, and fireplaces. This is easy and will significantly cut down on heating costs. Consider installing more insulation in the basement and attic and other leaky areas.
- **Tune your furnace.** 50% of a home's energy use goes to heating it, so you want to make sure your heating system is in tip-top shape<sup>x</sup>. Have your furnace tuned once a year (every two years for gas furnaces). Use mastic to seal all joints in warm air ducts, and insulate all warm-air ducts that run through unheated spaces.
- **Install Energy efficient windows.**
- **Switch to renewable energy.**

**Be a responsible consumer.** Americans have a lot of stuff. We are a commodity-based society, and each and every one of us consumes more than we need in one way or another. The best way to be a conscious consumer is to start consuming less. The next best thing is to be mindful of what you do consume and seek out products that are produced locally, and labeled organic, fair trade, free range, and other certifications denoting environmental or social accountability.

As a consumer, you have the power to "vote with your wallet." Outsourcing, corporate greed, environmental degradation, social injustice, pollution of our water supplies, and the presence of hormones in our food and toxins in our homes (to name a few) will continue unabashed *unless* we tell the culprits of these crimes we don't approve—and we won't buy products produced using these means. At the same time you can support businesses that promote a healthy environment, humane treatment of animals, and good working conditions simply by buying their products. Whenever you buy something, take a moment to reflect on what it took to get that finished product in your hands—who made this? Were they paid a fair wage? How far did this travel? Is this same product available locally? Could the production of this item cause the decline of a

delicate ecosystem, waste precious resources, pollute the air, or does it support the things I believe in? What kinds of weird chemicals are in this? How do I feel about the answers to these questions? Chances are, if the answers to those questions are less than savory, you will be less likely to purchase that item—and maybe you'll find you didn't need it in the first place. Buy products that you feel good about, and let your conscience be your guide.

Here is a smattering of ideas for how to be a responsible, conscious consumer:

- Buy local—support local businesses and strengthen the local economy
- Seek out products that are organic, free range, fair trade or other environmental/social certification whenever possible. This goes obviously goes for food, but also applies to apparel, cosmetics, and other personal items.
- Get yourself a handy-dandy Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch guide to help you make sustainable choices about the seafood you eat.
- BYOB! Bring your own bag and say No thank you to “paper or plastic.”
- Give a live plant instead of a bouquet of flowers
- Discover your personal flair with re-used and re-fashioned apparel
- Limit personal use of pesticides and toxic cleaning chemicals—seek natural alternatives.
- Purchase products with minimal packaging.
- Reuse items... don't use plastic plates and cups when you have a cupboard full of reusable kitchenware.
- Support green businesses.
- Offset travel. (link to green fund)
- Purchase low-phosphate soaps and dishwashing detergents.

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<sup>i</sup> Paul Scheckel. *The Home Energy Diet: How to Save Money by Making Your House Energy*

<sup>ii</sup> Gershon, David. *Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 pounds.*

<sup>iii</sup> Bourseiller, Phillipe. *365 Ways to Save the Earth*

<sup>iv</sup> The Center for The New American Dream

<sup>v</sup> Gershon, David. *Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 pounds.*

<sup>vi</sup> Pump Em Up, homepage. [www.pumpemup.org](http://www.pumpemup.org), Jan 2008.

<sup>vii</sup> Gershon, David. *Low Carbon Diet: A 30 Day Program to Lose 5000 pounds.*

<sup>viii</sup> Bourseiller, Phillipe. *365 Ways to Save the Earth*

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