

## 18 Quick and Easy Things You Can Do to Make a Difference

1. **Change your light bulbs:** Compact fluorescent light bulbs use one quarter the electricity of standard light bulbs and last several years longer.
2. **Hang-up the clothesline:** 60% of the energy associated with a piece of clothing is spent washing and drying it, so use efficient machines, cold water, only wash full loads, and do it at night when energy is cheaper.
3. **Take mass transit:** Public transit saves 1.4 billion gallons of gas (and about 1.5 million TONS of carbon dioxide annually).
4. **Pay your bills online:** If every U.S. home viewed and paid bills online, the switch would cut down solid waste by 1.6 billion tons/year and curb greenhouse gases by 2.1 million tons/year.
5. **Put your house on an energy diet:** Open a window instead of using AC; adjust the thermostat a few degrees higher in the summer and lower in the winter; caulk and weather-strip doors and windows; insulate walls and ceilings; use the dishwasher and clothes washer only when they are full; turn down the thermostat on you water heater. You could use 4,000 fewer pounds of carbon dioxide every year.
6. **Check the label:** The EPA has developed a rating system for energy-efficient appliances and other products. Using Energy Star appliances can help consumers reduce their utility bills by as much as 30%.
7. **Hug your water heater:** Wrapping your water heater in an insulating blanket (for \$10-20) can save your household about 250 pounds in carbon dioxide emissions annually.
8. **Skip the steak:** The global meat industry generates about 18% of the world's greenhouse emissions, more than transportation, according to the UN. Much of it is in the form of nitrous oxide and methane, which has a respective warming effect 23 and 296 times as great as carbon! If you switch to a vegetarian lifestyle, you can reduce your carbon contribution by up to 1.5 tons a year.
9. **Just say NO to plastic bags:** Every year more than 500 billion plastic bags are distributed, with less than 3% being recycled. They take up to a 1000 years to biodegrade. For your next trip to the grocery store, BYOB.
10. **Shut off your computer:** 75% of all the electricity consumed in the home is standby power used to keep electronics running when those machines are "off". Compared with a machine left on 24/7, a computer that is used 4 hours a day and then turned off would save about \$70 year and reduce CO2 emissions 83%, to 63kg per year.

11. **Support your local farmer:** Fruits, vegetables, meat, and milk produced closer to home rack up fewer petroleum miles than those trucked cross-country to your table. Search [localharvest.org](http://localharvest.org) by zip to find farmers markets, green grocers and food coops in your area. Even better, join a Community Supported Agricultural project: you buy shares in a farm and in return, you get a box of produce every week for the season. It eco-responsible, and it tastes great!
12. **Kill the lights:** At work, make sure that all computers, monitors, desk lights, printers, and faxes are turned off at night. A/C and overhead lights can be timed for turnoff. At home, when you leave a room, turn off the light...when you leave the house, leave on only necessary lights. This small act can mean real savings on your bill and fewer greenhouse gases in the air.
13. **Use recycled paper:** Paper *does* grow on trees; 900 million of them become pulp and paper every year. We can reduce that number by using recycled paper. It uses 60% less energy and each ton purchased saves 4,000 kW-h of energy and 7,000 gallons of water.
14. **Recycle your fleece:** Patagonia is collecting Polartec and Capilene to melt and make into new fabric and clothes. Making polyester fiber out of recycled garments can result in 76% energy saving and reduce green house gases by 71%.
15. **Take another look at vintage clothes:** High-end hand-me-downs are fashionable and avoid consuming all the energy used producing and shipping the new one. It's easy on the environment & your pocketbook.
16. **Think outside the packaging:** Everything costs energy to manufacture and deliver, and that means carbon. Reduce packaging with a little vigilance: give back the extra napkins and unwanted sugar or ketchup; carry that gallon of milk by its handle.
17. **Check your tires:** Giving you car a tune-up can improve mileage 4% or more, replacing a clogged air filter can boos efficiency 10%, keeping tires at proper inflation can improve mileage by 3%. You could put 200 fewer pounds of CO2 into the atmosphere each year.
18. **Consume less, share more, live simply:** Live simply. Meditate. Consume less. Think more. Get to know your neighbors. Borrow when you need to and share when asked.

*Brought to you by the Village of Ocean Beach Environmental Commission  
(prepared for VOBEC's first Environmental Awareness Day 2007)*

*Adapted from 51 Things You Can do to Make a Difference, Time Magazine, April 9, 2007, pages 69-100. For more information, visit [time.com](http://time.com).*