

Ways to be Green

Thanks largely to Sierra Club's Green Tips – daily tips you can subscribe to receive in your mailbox.

REDUCE.REUSE.RECYCLE

Do you

- ___ **Reduce/reuse printer paper (double side printing/copying) ?** The average U.S. office worker goes through 10,000 sheets of copy paper a year. Make a new habit -- print on both sides or use the back side of old documents for faxes, scrap paper, or drafts.

- ___ **Reuse /Recycle magazines?** Before bundling for recycling, consider if there is a Senior center, health clinic, or other community facility that might appreciate them.

- ___ **Recycle newspaper?**
Recycling a stack of newspapers only 4 feet high will save a good-sized tree.

- ___ **Recycle glass?** Taking recycled glass to a place that accepts separated colors means your glass will be reprocessed into a higher grade product.

- ___ **Recycle plastics?** Not all plastic is created equal, and not all recyclers accept all grades of plastic. Check the bottom of container and your recycler's requirements to get the most out of your recycled plastic.

- ___ **Recycle aluminum and steel cans?**

- ___ **BUY products made from recycled material?**
Producing new paper, glass, and metal products from recycled materials saves 70 to 90 percent of the energy and pollution, including CO2, that would result if the product came from virgin materials. Please...buy recycled products!

- ___ **Pay your bills and bank electronically?** If you are still paying your bills the old-fashioned way, consider switching to electronic statements. If all American households received and paid their bills online, it would eliminate more than 800,000 tons of waste each year.

- ___ **Recycle or donate for reuse old electronics for recycling?** (see city recycling information for electronics and hazardous waste, below)
Americans toss out more than 100 million cell phones every year. Keep their toxic ingredients (including lead, mercury, and arsenic) out of landfills by recycling your old cell. There are many local initiatives to collect and reuse old cell phones, or you can find a place through CollectiveGood.com.

- ___ **Take in old paint/oil/car batteries/medicines/other hazardous waste for disposal?**
A single car battery contains about 21 pounds of lead, three pounds of plastic, and one gallon of sulfuric acid -- all of which can be recycled. Go to earth911.org to find out how.

City of Chicago

[Household Products and Electronics Collection and Training Center](#)

1150 N. North Branch

[Location](#) (From the Kennedy Expressway, take the Division Street (east) exit)

Hours: Tues. 7 am - noon, Thursdays 2 pm - 7 pm, and the 1st Saturday of each month, from 8 am - 3 pm.

This long-term HHW program is the result of an intergovernmental agreement between the Illinois EPA and the City of Chicago's Dept. of the Environment. This facility accepts batteries, electronics, household chemicals, and even old medicines.

[Click here](#) to get more details from the City of Chicago's website

PERSONAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION

The average house creates double the greenhouse-gas emissions of the average car. Audit your home's energy use -- and see how you can reduce it -- at <http://hes.lbl.gov/>.

Do you

- ___ **Keep your home cool in the winter? Have you moved your winter thermostat DOWN two degrees in the past year?** You can get used to wearing sweaters and living at 70°F or less.
- ___ **Keep your home warm in the summer? Have you moved your summer thermostat UP two degrees from last year?** You can get used to 80°F in summer.
- ___ **Replace incandescent light bulbs with more energy efficient ones? (75W with 25W Energy Star; compact fluorescents (CFLs)).** Change a light, change the world: If every U.S. household replaced its most commonly used incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents, we'd cut our electricity use for lighting in half -- and lower our annual CO2 emissions by about 62.5 million tons. Note that the CFLs cannot be disposed of in the trash.
- ___ **Set your monitor or laptop to go into sleep mode automatically during short breaks?** This can cut energy use by 70 percent. Then be sure to turn off your computer and monitor -- and the power strip they're plugged into -- when you're done for the day.
- ___ **Wash your clothes in cold water?** About 90 percent of the energy used to wash clothes is spent heating water. Most garments can be successfully washed in cold water, which also reduces shrinkage and fading.
- ___ **Put dishes in your dishwasher without rinsing them first?** According to *Consumer Reports*, prerinsing your dishes wastes up to 20 gallons of water per load -- and doesn't get them any cleaner.
- ___ **Make sure your dryer's lint filter is clean before every use?** Cleaning the lint filter on your dryer can decrease the energy used per load by up to 30 percent.
- ___ **Research the most energy-efficient appliances before replacing an old one? Will you consider a front-loading machine when it's time to buy a new clothes washer?** They use one-third to one-half the water and less soap than top-loaders, and they're gentler on clothes too.
- ___ **Replace appliances with Energy Star appliances (air conditioner, stove, refrigerator, furnace, water heater)**
Replacing an old refrigerator or an air conditioner with an energy-efficient model will save you money on your electricity bill and cut global warming pollution. Look for the Energy Star label on new appliances or visit their website at www.energystar.gov to find the most energy-efficient products.
- ___ **Remodeling?** Consider installing a tankless on-demand water heater, which is around 30 percent more efficient than a conventional one -- and lasts longer too! But it is not as easy to make this green action a reality, we've learned in the South Loop. Local residents have had frustrating and expensive experiences with trying to do the right thing here. Email us for more info: greensouthloop@yahoo.com
- ___ **Have low-flow showerheads and faucets installed in your home?** They cut water use in half.
- ___ **Replace single-glazed windows with [ENERGY STAR](#) windows?**

EARTH-FRIENDLY HOME

Do you

- ___ **Paint with low VOC (volatile organic compound) paint when changing colors or freshening up a room?** A new coat of paint brightens up your home, but it can dirty the air too. The volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, that off-gas while you paint react with sunlight to form smog. Look for paints that meet the EPA's "low-VOC" standards or, better yet, ones with the Green Seal label.
- ___ **Replace carpets/floors with earth-friendly materials?** Most carpeting is made with toxic chemicals that take weeks to air out.
- ___ **Use a push or "reel" lawnmower instead of a gas one?** This change alone can cut your household emissions by 10 percent.
- ___ **Plant your yard with native plants that attract birds and butterflies?** Native plants often have lower water requirements than others. And they can provide important food and shelter to birds and butterflies.
- ___ **Water your lawns early in the morning?** During the hot summer months the best time to water your lawn is between 5 and 10 a.m. Later than that, water evaporates before it can soak into the roots, wasting two precious resources — your lake water and your money.
- ___ **Keep rain water in your yard/property? Diverting rain water from going into the sewer system helps reduce river pollution.**
- ___ **Compost your raw fruit and vegetable scraps, eggshells, and coffee grounds?** Composting could drastically reduce the almost 500 pounds per household per year of organic matter hauled to dumps, while creating fertile soil for your vegetable garden.
- ___ **Want to compost but don't have the room?** Vermiculture - composting with worms - works great indoors!

PERSONAL HEALTH

Do you

- ___ **Use home-filtered water and reusable water bottles?** It takes a lot of fossil fuel to ship bottled water and other drinks. Switch to home-filter for water and reusable stainless steel water bottles instead of buying bottled water. Instead of taking fizzy waters or sodas to work for lunch, bring water or iced tea made in a reusable bottle.
- ___ **Buy food grown locally?** Food travels an average of 1,500 to 2,000 miles to reach our plates -- but not if you buy from a farmer's market in the summer. You can ask your local grocer to indicate what produce is locally sourced, if they don't already. You can even explore buying it from one of the more than 1,200 small U.S. farms that offer fresh produce "subscriptions."
- ___ **Eat organic one (or more) meal a week?** If organic foods made up just 10 percent of everyone's diet, it would restore more than 6 billion pounds of carbon to our soil, and eliminate more than 2 million pounds of antibiotics used in livestock and more than 2 billion barrels of imported oil annually. Find out more at [Mission Organic 2010](#).
- ___ **Wish eating organic foods wasn't so expensive?** To eat organically on a budget, choose minimally processed food, buy in bulk to avoid marketing and packaging costs, cook as much as you can from scratch, shop locally and in season, and consider using meat as a seasoning rather than the centerpiece of a meal.

- ___ **Love fish to eat?** Opt for Wild Alaskan or Pacific salmon over the farmed kind. It's better for you, and the ocean. Making the right seafood choices is good for the planet. To help you make informed decisions, download the Shedd Aquarium's [Right Bite sustainable seafood card](#). You can also download a handy reference guide to potentially dangerous or overfished seafood at sierraclub.org/mercury/fishguide.pdf.

- ___ **Use cotton, cloth napkins?** Napkins made from 100% cotton are an alternative to paper napkins or paper towels. If every U.S. household replaced one roll of regular paper towels with 100 percent recycled ones, we'd save 544,000 trees. AND, they are easy to make and make great house-warming presents. Cut an 18" square from cloth and turn all edges under 1/4" and zig zag a hem.

- ___ **Use reusable grocery bags? Your own containers for left-overs from a restaurant?**

- ___ **Use cosmetics that have healthy ingredients?** Only 10 percent of cosmetic ingredients have been screened for safety. Find out what's in your favorite brand at safecosmetics.org.

- ___ **Get in touch with nature while you get in shape?** Exercising outdoors, exposed to the elements and uneven terrain, can burn 30 percent more calories than hitting the gym.

- ___ **Pay attention to what you put ON your body as much as what you put IN your body?** Make a fashion statement by supporting designers and manufacturers that care about the planet. The [Organic Consumers Association](#) lists companies making everything from beach wear to little black dresses out of pesticide-free cotton and wool.

- ___ **Avoid using traditional dry-cleaning?** The main solvent used in dry-cleaning, perchloroethylene (or perc), is a likely carcinogen that also contaminates our soil and water. Opt for greener alternatives like wet cleaning (a kind of high-tech version of hand-washing) and liquid-CO2 dry cleaning. Or just avoid clothes that require dry cleaning in the first place.

- ___ **Use no- or low- toxin household products?** For example, do you know that vinegar is a great laundry freshener product? Other ideas at <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/healthy-home/nontoxic-cleaning>

ON THE ROAD

Do you ...

- ___ **Bike or walk to work...shop...visit friends or family ... at least once a week?**

- ___ **Use a grocery cart, instead of a car, to go shopping?**

- ___ **Use highways less and public transportation more by taking trains or buses whenever you can?** Each year, Americans waste 3.5 billion hours and 5.6 billion gallons of fuel while they sit in traffic. Spend your commute reading and relaxing instead of cultivating road rage

- ___ **Keep your tires inflated to the recommended pressure in your owner's manual?** Underinflating tires by as little as five pounds can cut your gas mileage by 2 percent.

- ___ **Car pool to meetings/events/recreation?**

- ___ **When you are in the market for a new car, will you buy a vehicle that gets more miles per gallon than your current one?**

- ___ **When traveling, do you look for a hotel that is working to save water and energy and reduce waste?** Get listings at greenhotels.com or greenseal.org/programs/lodging_properties.cfm.

- ___ **Use I-Go or other car-sharing service?**