

Sustainability Made Simple

Green Guide

Everyday choices you can make
to protect the planet's future



California Academy of Sciences

The problem of sustainability may seem overwhelming, but there are basic steps that everyone can take to help achieve a lasting, healthy future for the planet Earth.

In this guide, learn how to start small and work toward big sustainable changes for yourself and your community.

A LITTLE GOES A LONG WAY

Pale green tips are easy choices and actions that, while small, add up to a huge difference in the consumption of energy and materials.

DO MORE FOR THE PLANET

Light green tips may take more time, planning, or resources, but the positive impacts for the planet are dramatic.

MAXIMUM GREENING

Solid green tips have the highest requirements, but offer the biggest rewards. These choices are the best for the planet.

Getting around

Everyone needs to get around, but vehicle emissions are causing serious damage to the climate. The following changes will help reduce your carbon pollution, and some can help keep you fit and the same time.

Choosing your mode

- Walk or ride your bike for short trips.
- Commute using public transportation or by carpooling.
- Consider purchasing a hybrid or fuel-efficient compact car.

Driving habits

- Conserve gas by observing the speed limit.
- Turn off your engine rather than idling when you are stopped for more than one minute.
- Open your windows when going slowly; close your windows and switch on the A/C when on the freeway.

Vehicle maintenance

- Keep your tires inflated to their proper pressure. It will increase your gas mileage.
- Check and replace your air filter regularly. It will reduce carbon pollution.
- Get regular tune-ups. It is beneficial for both mileage and emission reduction.

Heading out of town

- Reduce the number of business trips you take. Use teleconferencing whenever possible.
- Take the train or bus instead of flying or driving. If you have to fly, fly direct when possible.
- Purchase verified carbon offsets. Carbon offsets fund environmental projects that reduce carbon pollution, including wind farms and solar energy installations.

ACADEMY GREEN

“Encourage children to become environmentally conscious at an early age. Small actions over the course of a lifetime can make a big difference. For example, turn off the tap when you’re brushing your teeth, and watch less television.”

Dr. Peter Roopnarine

Curator of Invertebrate Zoology & Geology
California Academy of Sciences

Understanding your carbon footprint is the first step to reducing it.
Measure it online using a carbon calculator.

On the menu

What you choose to eat and drink affects your health and the environment. Sustainable food choices may seem complicated, but by following some of these suggestions you'll lead a healthier, greener life.

Meat and dairy

Industrial farming of livestock is very energy-intensive, and is responsible for more carbon pollution than the entire transportation industry.

- Look for free-range, grass-fed beef and organic dairy products.
- Eat less beef by substituting chicken or seafood—it's the easiest and fastest way to reduce your carbon pollution.
- Eat more vegetarian meals.

Seafood

- Purchase seafood that has been harvested sustainably from the ocean. A good resource is the Seafood Watch Card from the Monterey Bay Aquarium, carried by the Academy. Ask a staff member or visit www.calacademy.org/seafood.
- Bring the Seafood Watch Card to restaurants you frequent and ask the staff to consider sourcing only sustainable seafood.
- Ask the government to pass legislation protecting fisheries from overfishing.

Shopping

- Cut down on processed foods.
- Look for local, seasonal, organic foods.
- Subscribe to a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program—CSA members receive regular baskets of organic produce from a local farmer, in return for helping to fund the farm.

Eating out

- Choose local restaurants over chains. They are more likely to operate sustainably.
- Patronize restaurants that source local, seasonal, and organic ingredients.
- Bring your own reusable take-out containers from home.

ACADEMY GREEN

“When landscaping your garden, consider using native plant species. In so doing, you will conserve water and provide the most welcoming environment for a diverse assemblage of wildlife.”

Dr. Frank Almeda

Curator of Botany

California Academy of Sciences

At home

Choices made around the home have a huge impact on the natural world. You can quickly lower that impact by adopting some of the changes below.

Waste

- Purchase products with less packaging.
- Recycle bottles, cans, plastic, paper, and old electronics. Compost food waste.
- If your local government has no curbside recycling and composting program, lobby them to develop one.

Energy

- Check if your utility provider offers green power, carbon offsets, or a similar environmental program.
- Lobby your elected representatives to support legislation that limits carbon pollution.
- Install solar, wind, or geothermal energy. Look into government incentive programs and specialty loans that can help reduce your costs.

Lighting

- Make it a habit to turn off all unnecessary lights.
- Switch all of your bulbs to compact fluorescents (CFLs). Make sure to dispose of CFLs properly, because they contain mercury and should not go into landfills.
- Install motion sensor lights that automatically switch off.

Home heating and cooling

- Keep your thermostat at 78° F in the summer and 68° F in the winter.
- Turn down heat or air conditioning when you are sleeping or not at home.
- Install a programmable thermostat to ensure your home's temperature is optimal for your comfort and for the environment.

Insulation

- Conduct a home energy audit. You can do it yourself online: www.pge.com/myhome/saveenergymoney/analyzer/en. Companies in some areas will conduct a free at-home audit; check your local listings.
- Replace any single-paned windows with double-paned models.
- Ensure that your foundation, walls, and roof are well insulated.

Electronics and appliances

- Turn off all electronics, including TVs and computers, when not in use.
- Either unplug or use power strips to shut off electronics—many electronics consume standby power when they are turned off but still plugged in.
- Purchase Energy Star appliances.

Water conservation

- Reduce the amount you water your lawn and gardens. Water in the evenings and early mornings to reduce evaporation.
- Install low-flow toilets or place jugs filled with water in your toilet tanks to lower the water they use per flush.
- Install low-flow faucets and shower heads—they can reduce water use by up to 50 percent.

Hot water conservation

Lowering your hot water use means lowering both your overall water use and your energy needs.

- Take shorter showers.
- Wash your clothes in warm or cold water only.
- Turn down your hot water heater to 120° F and wrap it in a thermal blanket.

Purchasing

- When you go shopping, bring your own reusable bags.
- Buy eco-friendly products that contain no toxic chemicals and are produced using sustainable methods.
- Evaluate your needs and cut down on unnecessary purchases. Donate or sell unneeded items and buy used items from your friends and neighbors.

Since 1853, the California Academy of Sciences has devoted itself to increasing knowledge about the extraordinary diversity of life on the planet Earth. A key component of that mission in the modern era is an unwavering dedication to environmental awareness and action. There is a broad scientific consensus that unsustainable human demands upon the planet are directly linked to climate change, degradation of natural habitats, loss of species, and shortages of essential resources. Through its exhibits, programs, and ongoing research, the Academy is committed to educating the public about the challenges currently facing the planet's environment, and providing solutions to meet these challenges.

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