

Saving the Planet from A-Z

A

Action - do some thing! Not everything suggested here is of equal value, but it all helps to slow down the process of climate change and/or demonstrates a care for the earth.

An Inconvenient Truth - be challenged to change by watching this video/DVD by Al Gore.

Aviation is especially damaging to the atmosphere. Locally sourced products or those transported across water by ship are probably less damaging, so long as they haven't been grown in artificially heated greenhouses, for example.

B

Bottles - use glass ones rather than plastic, and recycle the bottle, and at least re-use the plastic ones.

Batteries - one rechargeable battery replaces between 50 and 300 throw-away batteries. All batteries have toxic heavy metals which are difficult to dispose of safely.

Boiler - if your current one is over 15 years old, consider replacing it with a high-efficiency condensing type.

C

Clothes to and from charity shops.

Cleaning cloths and dusters- use worn out clothing rather than disposable cloths.

Companion gardening - to reduce pests in the garden.

Curtains - to reduce heat loss.

Coloured clothes and bedlinen generally wash well at lower temperatures than whites.

D

DIY - paint your walls in pale colours so that you need less artificial light; avoid solvent based paints.

Death - specify a biodegradable cardboard coffin - save trees.

Driving at 50 mph uses 25% less fuel than at 70 mph.

E

Ecotricity or some other 'green' electricity supplier.

Energy-efficient equipment - check the rating when going to buy a new fridge, freezer, dishwasher, washing machine, or dryer.

Eat seasonal produce.

F

Food - In the UK, we throw away more than half of what we buy!

Freecycle - a website where you can give away what you don't need and maybe acquire what someone else no longer needs www.freecycle.com.

G

Grey water - from the bath, washing up or laundry is suitable for other uses e.g. watering the lawn or garden, washing the car, swishing down the path after sweeping it.

Greetings cards - reuse them: cut off the fronts to use as postcards or remake into cards.

Gifts - wrapped in cloth and ribbon rather than with paper and sellotape.

H

Holidays - in Britain - and if possible, travel by train or coach.

Houseplants are useful as detoxifiers - especially green plants e.g. spider plant, ivy, peace lily, chrysanthemums, gerbra, aspidistra, ferns, palms.

Hippos - put one in your toilet cistern to reduce the amount of water you flush down the toilet.

Handkerchiefs - cloth ones wash and are reusable, paper ones are not.

Hedgehog - if you can encourage one into your garden, it's better than using pellets to get rid of slugs and snails.

I

Ironing - do as little as possible - do not be overfussy about it! Use a shiny board cover that reflects back the heat to the clothes and improves efficiency, or place aluminium foil underneath the ironing board cover.

Ink cartridges - reuse or refill.

Insulation - check the effectiveness of your home insulation, including in the roof.

J

Jute bags reduce the use of plastic ones.

Junk mail - if you can't stop receiving it, recycle it; in the UK you can sign up to a service that removes you from junk mail address lists - register on line at www.fpsonline.org.uk .

K

Kitchen - check its energy efficiency.

Kettle - fill it with the number of mugs of water that you are likely to use.

L

Library - a useful place to find out what more you can do to save the planet! If you haven't access to a computer, the local library is probably a place where you can use one to access the web, and have a bit of help from a librarian to do it (try and visit in an 'off peak' time).

Library again - use it instead of buying books, CD's, DVD's and videos.

Lighting - use energy-efficient light bulbs - they're better now than they used to be!

Labels - get to know them - energy efficiency, Fair trade, recycleability, organic certification, wash temperature, etc.

M

Medicines - only request on your repeat prescription what you need; dispose of unwanted medicines carefully.

Money - ethical investments - check out how your money is used.

Mobile phones - turn your charger off at the wall when it's not in use; recycle your old one.

N

Neighbours - get to know them and so improve your home security without the need for energy-greedy security lights.

Nappies - a community laundering service is more economical than using disposable nappies.

O

Organic food means less pesticides and insecticides on the earth and in you.

P

Pets - think carefully whether you really need to have a pet - more than a fifth of the world's tuna catch goes into cat food; pet food produces a huge number of tins, and pet litter takes up space in the landfill.

Peat - is a non-renewable resource; peat-free compost can be as effective.

Paint - donate your left-over paint to a community project.

Q

Questions

How was this food/product produced?

How was it transported to my plate / house?

What did it cost me?

What did it cost someone else?

What did it cost the planet?

Why did I buy it?

Do I really need it?

Is there an alternative?

R

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

If there are no local recycling facilities, ask your council for them.

Rain butt for garden use.

Razors - reusable ones rather than disposable.

Radiators - thermostatic controls give better heat control.

S

Shrink the Footprint - the Church of England's National Environment Campaign: www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org

Showers generally use less water than baths.

Soap nuts - dried fruit of the rittha tree, native to India and Nepal, they prevent the use of detergents.

Sports and recreation - clean and environmentally friendly? The best ones are walking, yoga, pilates, martial arts, swimming in the sea, rivers or lakes; conservation activities e.g. drystone walling, tree planting; team games - a new one is Ultimate Frisbee - the disc is made from recycled material.

T

Taps - turn them off when brushing your teeth, shaving or washing the vegetables; fix dripping taps.

Drink tap water rather than bottled water, filtered if you prefer.

Tyres - inflated to correct level improves petrol consumption.

Tumble driers - replace with a washing line, or if you have to use one, fill it and don't over-dry clothes.

Tupperware - airtight food containers can be reused.

Time - a lot of these things take a bit more time than we expect to allow for things. A lifestyle change is required of us.

U

Vacuum cleaner - when you need a new one, buy a bagless model and save on environmentally unfriendly bags.

V

Vinegar diluted in water makes a good cleaning agent around the home, e.g. for wiping kitchen surfaces, cleaning the bathroom.

Vegetables - grow your own if you can, even if it's a tub with some beans in or a bag with tomatoes.

W

Wild foraging - e.g. blackberries, isolated plants growing wild (sometimes where there was once a house nearby, e.g. fruit trees, raspberries).

Washing machines, tumble driers, dishwashers - full load and economy setting, the lowest temperature that will do the job.

Window boxes - promote biodiversity; as do bird feeders and hedges rather than fences.

Worms for recycling vegetable waste - e.g. wiggly@wigglywiggles.co.uk .

X

Detox from your TV and lessen its influence on your life. www.whitedot.org

Y

Yellow pages - a useful reference and saves on petrol usage.

Z

Zapping food in the microwave uses much less energy than a conventional oven. *f*