
Home Sustainability Action Guide



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Report**

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Preface

This is the February 4, 2008, working draft of the Leonardo Academy Home Sustainability Action Guide.

Objectives

In the course of our work, we continue to encounter people who want to know more about what they can do at home to increase their sustainability. This guide is our answer to that question. We hope that you will find it useful in your daily life. Remember, the most important thing about sustainability is to stick with it by incorporating your choices into your daily life. So, with that in mind, pick a few items from our recommendations and take action!

We are always looking for ways to improve the usefulness and functionality of this action guide, so please contact us if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions.

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Section 1: Food

1. Compost food waste outside or in an indoor compost bucket.
2. Use the microwave instead of the stove to heat small items or to re-heat leftovers.
3. Forego preheating your oven if baking, roasting, or broiling a dish that will take longer than one hour to cook. For breads and cakes, preheat for ten minutes or less.
4. Follow the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch checklist to know what seafood to avoid (<http://www.mbayaq.org/cr/seafoodwatch.asp>). Choose sustainably harvested wild fish when possible, instead of farmed varieties, to reduce your exposure to heavy metals.
5. Shop at farmers' markets or buy locally-produced food from your neighborhood supermarket or natural foods store.
6. Buy USDA certified organic food.
7. Grow the vegetables and herbs you eat frequently in a home or community garden.
8. Purchase fresh fruits and vegetables rather than canned or frozen to eliminate packaging waste.
9. Save leftovers and take them for lunch.
10. Freeze quantities of food or leftovers that are too big to eat right away, in order to reduce food waste.
11. When dining out, carry with you a non-disposable food container to take home what you don't eat.
12. Cut out at least one meal of meat per week.
13. Use non-disposable containers and dishes to store food.
14. Install water filters on your faucets rather than purchasing bottled water.

Section 2: Shopping

1. Buy products packaged in recyclable materials or products that use less packaging.
2. Buy items in bulk to further reduce packaging waste.
3. Take reusable bags, such as cloth or canvas, when grocery shopping.
4. Buy clothing made from sustainably-produced materials and manufactured by companies that provide fair working conditions and wages to employees.
5. Purchase goods and services that are produced and delivered in cleaner ways. Buy commodities that are grown or produced locally to reduce emissions that result from transport and shipping. Look for reusable and recyclable products, and buy from companies that have good environmental track records.

Section 3: Cleaning

1. Hang clothes to dry whenever possible. Clean the lint screen of the clothes dryer after every use, and clean ducts and vents regularly.
2. Wash clothes with cold water whenever possible. Only use hot water for very dirty loads. Always use the appropriate water level and amount of detergent.
3. Use dry cleaning companies that use environmentally sensitive cleaning systems. Purchase a reusable garment bag to transport your dry-cleaned clothes, and return your hangers to the dry cleaners for reuse or recycling.
4. Purchase organic or environmentally safe cleaning products or make your own out of vinegar, baking soda, and water.
5. Buy sturdy cleaning tools (like mops, toilet bowl brushes, and dusters) that will last for a long time. Avoid disposable cleaning tools.
6. Purchase biodegradable, phosphorus-free laundry soap without chemical and dye additives.

Section 4: Personal Grooming

1. Turn off the water while brushing your teeth.
2. When taking a bath, plug the drain in the tub before turning on the water.
3. Or, to save hot water, take a 4-5 minutes shower instead of a bath.
4. Buy products made from natural ingredients that are not tested on animals.

Section 5: Community

1. Ask your employer or school to become Cleaner and Greener[®] Certified.
2. Look for the Cleaner and Greener[®] Seal when you shop. A list of certified companies is available at www.cleanerandgreener.org.
3. Ask your friends and relatives to fill out a Home Sustainability Checklist.

Section 6: Work

1. Take the bus, bike, or walk at least twice a week to school, work, an errand or an appointment.
2. Start a carpool or check into vanpool options at work.
3. Work from home one or two days per month.
4. Use both sides of paper when copying or printing to reduce paper waste.
5. Eliminate a cover page when faxing to save paper on both ends of the transmission.
6. Use a ceramic mug or thermos for your morning coffee, rather than a disposable cup.
7. When possible, turn off your office lights and take advantage of natural lighting from the sun.
8. Adjust the power management feature on your work computer to operate at low energy mode when not in immediate use.
9. Turn off computers, printers and lights, if possible, at the end of the work day.

Section 7: Travel

1. Consider a “service vacation” or other way to give back to the community when you travel.
2. Purchase emissions offsets for your travels.
3. Unplug your appliances before leaving home.
4. Use public transportation or rent a hybrid or fuel-efficient vehicle when traveling.
5. Reuse linens and towels during your hotel stay to reduce water consumption.
6. Turn off all lights when leaving your hotel room.
7. Use a refillable water bottle, canteen, or thermos instead of purchasing bottled water.
8. Use a digital camera and eliminate the use of hazardous chemicals for processing prints from film.

Section 8: Vehicle Maintenance

1. Keep your vehicle in good running condition. Have the vehicle inspected regularly, and follow the manufacturer's instructions on routine maintenance, such as oil and filter changes.
2. Make sure tires are properly inflated and aligned, and fix any leaks immediately.

3. Consider replacing worn tires with retreads to reduce the use of virgin materials.
4. Get warning lights checked out as soon as they appear.
5. Change your vehicle's air filter regularly.
6. Purchase an alternative fuel vehicle or vehicle that achieves overall fuel mileage greater than 40 mpg, or 60 mpg.

Section 9: Waste/Recycling

1. Use "stuff exchange" websites such as www.freecycle.org instead of buying new items and throwing away or donating old ones.
2. Reduce the amount of junk mail you receive by registering with the National Do Not Mail List (https://www.directmail.com/directory/mail_preference/?ref=G) or the Mail Preference Service (https://www.dmachoice.org/MPS/mps_consumer_description.php).
3. Recycle all paper, newspaper, plastics, glass, aluminum, and other metals.
4. Purchase rechargeable batteries to reduce hazardous waste.
5. Dispose of light bulbs, electronics, batteries, paint, cleaners, and other household hazardous waste items at appropriate municipal drop-off centers.
6. When replacing your personal computer, consider purchasing a refurbished model to reduce manufacturing waste.
7. Download software online to reduce computer disk and packaging waste.
8. Take advantage of online banking and electronic billing to save paper.

Section 10: Yard and Garden/Home Exterior

1. Eliminate herbicide, pesticide and fertilizer use in the yard.
2. Leave grass clippings on the lawn or use them as mulch for plantings.
3. Compost yard waste.
4. Use native plantings and rain gardens.
5. Install rain barrels at downspouts and use rainwater to water the yard.
6. Use drip irrigation instead of regular sprinklers to gardens, grass, and flower beds.

7. Water in the evenings or mornings to reduce evaporation and allow more water directly to the plants.
8. Install photocells, timers, or motion sensors on exterior lights.
9. Cover your pool when not in use to reduce water evaporation.

Section 11: Home Repair

1. Use low VOC paints, stains, varnishes, adhesives, and carpeting.
2. Use FSC-certified wood for home repairs and improvements.
3. Use recycled or recyclable sheet flooring and carpeting. When replacing wood floors, choose sustainably harvested bamboo over conventionally harvested hardwood.
4. Select highly reflective roofing materials when installing a new roof to save in cooling costs.
5. Only select contractors who pledge to recycle construction waste when remodeling your home.

Section 12: Water

1. Fix all dripping water faucets.
2. Install a low water (1 gallon per flush or less) toilet.
3. Install a low flow showerhead (1.6 gallon per minute or less).
4. Fit faucets with low flow aerators (1.6 gallon per minute or less).
5. Use large water-hogging appliances such as the washing machine and dishwasher during off-peak hours (i.e., between 8pm and 8am) to reduce municipal wastewater treatment plant loads.

Section 13: Energy

1. Replace burned out light bulbs with compact fluorescents or LEDs.
2. Order renewable energy, such as wind power or solar power, from your power company.
3. Visit <http://www.cleanerandgreener.org/resources/calculators.htm> to use our emissions calculator and calculate the emissions created by energy use in your home.
4. Turn off interior lights whenever you leave the room for more than two minutes.
5. Turn off appliances (TV, stereo, computer, etc.) when not in use. Turn off at the switch or wall socket, instead of leaving them on standby.

6. Plug electronics--such as computers, printers, and lamps--into a power strip and turn off when not in use.
7. Unplug your cell phone charger when not in use.
8. Check out the energy saving options on your computer, enable standby, and set the system to hibernate after 10 or 15 minutes.
9. In winter, set your thermostat 2 degrees lower; in summer, set it 2 degrees higher – better yet, install a programmable thermostat and recycle your old dial (it contains mercury).
10. Use shades and drapes to block out sunlight during hot weather and let it in during cold weather.
11. Set your refrigerator temperature at 38 to 42 degrees Fahrenheit, and your freezer at 0 to 5 degrees Fahrenheit.
12. If you have one, unplug that old second refrigerator in the garage or basement; old appliances tend to consume a lot of energy.
13. Clean refrigerator and air conditioner coils regularly, and defrost freezer to eliminate ice build-up.
14. Keep the hot water heater set close to (but not below) 120 degrees (Note: Those with weak or suppressed immune systems should keep the thermostat set closer to 130).
15. Check for leaks around the stove and refrigerator doors, and replace seals if necessary (a dollar bill stuck into the closed door should be difficult to pull out – if it's not, the seal needs replacing).
16. Clean and service your furnace and air conditioners yearly, and replace your filters 3-4 times a year.
17. Have a certified home energy rating conducted and implement the recommendations.
18. Install low emissivity (low E) glass with a solar heat gain coefficient of .40 or less and a u-value of .35 or less.
19. Use large electrical appliances such as the washing machine, dryer and dishwasher during off-peak hours (i.e., between 8pm and 8am) to reduce power plant loads.
20. When shopping for electronics or major appliances, such as washers and dryers, refrigerators, and heating/cooling systems, buy ENERGY STAR labeled products.
21. Conserve power (and manufacturing waste) by purchasing an all-in-one printer, copier, scanner, and fax machine.

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