

## 50 Eco-Friendly Tips to Reduce Your Impact on the Environment

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April 22 marks the 46th annual Earth Day celebration. Earth Day was originally established by Senator Gaylord Nelson in 1970 to bring environmental issues to the forefront of the national agenda. Until then, there were little to no legal or regulatory mechanisms to protect the environment.

Later that year, President Richard Nixon called for the establishment of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. On December 4, 1970, William Ruckelshaus was sworn in as the agency's first administrator. A growing interest in protecting the nation's air and water led to the enactment of the Clean Air Act in 1970 and the Clean Water Act in 1972.

In the 46 years since the establishment of Earth Day, much has changed in the way that environmental issues are handled in the United States and other countries around the world. However, as the human population continues to grow, Earth's resources will continue to be depleted. Living sustainably that is, living in a way such that human needs are met while protecting Earth's resources, so that a human population can survive indefinitely is key to the long-term survival of human life on Earth. Following are 50 eco-friendly tips to help you reduce your impact on the environment.



April 22 marks the 46th annual celebration of Earth Day. (Photo credit: Digital Vision/Getty Images)

- Bring your own bags to the grocery store.** If you're only picking up a couple of items that can easily be carried, forego a bag all together. Many stores offer a discount when you use your own bags; some city or state ordinances require an additional charge if you don't bring your own bags.
- Remember the three Rs: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.** If your school doesn't have a recycling program, find out what it would take to implement one.
- Conserving energy is important.** Remember to turn off the lights when you leave a room. Unplug chargers or electronic devices that are not in use.
- When meeting up with friends, **carpool rather than driving individual cars.**
- Be aware of how items are packaged.** Buying items with the least amount of packaging helps to keep waste out of landfills.
- Take shorter showers.**
- If you bring your lunch to school, use a reusable container.**
- Encourage your family to reduce your household energy use by **placing your thermostat on a lower setting in the winter and on a higher setting in the summer.**
- Reduce the amount of paper you use** by printing on both sides of a sheet of paper. Re-use paper printed on one side by using the opposite side as scrap paper. Remember to **recycle paper** after you are done with it.
- Dispose of leftover paint, chemicals, and batteries properly.** Many cities have special collection dates for these types of items, or have a designated site where these items can be dropped off.
- When helping out with the chores, **don't run the laundry machine or dishwasher until the machines are fully loaded.**
- Replace incandescent lightbulbs** with compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) or light-emitting diodes (LEDs). Be sure to dispose of CFLs properly.
- Use a reusable water bottle rather than disposable water bottles.** Staying hydrated is important, and so is keeping unnecessary trash out of the landfill. If you don't like the taste of tap water, invest in a faucet-mounted filter or a water pitcher with a filter.
- Take public transit, walk, or bike to your destination whenever possible.**
- Start a compost pile with your household waste.** Compost is an excellent source of soil for gardening projects.
- If you have the yard space, **consider growing a garden.** In addition to growing your own food, you could also plant flowering plants that **provide food resources for and attract** bees, monarch butterflies, birds, and other animals.
- Consult **Seafood Watch** before ordering or buying seafood.
- Reduce the amount of junk mail your family receives by opting out.**
- Get a houseplant.** Studies indicate that houseplants help to remove pollutants from the air, increase room moisture, and can even help to improve your mood.
- Eat a meatless meal at least once a week.**
- Wash your laundry in cold water.** Because most of the energy consumed while running a load is used to heat the water, the average household can eliminate as much as 350 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions annually by washing their dirty laundry in cold water.
- When conditions allow, **air dry your clothing and linens** rather than using the drier.
- The next time you have to wrap a gift, instead of using wrapping paper, use a **reusable gift bag, wrap the gift in newspaper, or cut open a paper grocery bag and design your own.**
- Buy local.** Support local producers by shopping at farmers markets.
- Recycle your outdated electronics** such as cell phones or laptops. Many wireless service providers have recycling programs for old phones; you can also [check out this EPA site](#) to find a recycling program near you.
- Instead of buying new, **consider buying items secondhand.** If you're looking to refresh your wardrobe, consider **hosting a clothing swap** with your friends.
- Rather than using sleep mode, **turn off your desktop or laptop computer at the end of the day.**
- Use rechargeable batteries.** Recycle alkaline batteries rather than throwing them in the trash.
- Recycle your used plastic bags.** Many grocery stores have plastic-bag collection boxes at their entrances.
- Ask for e-tickets instead of paper tickets.**
- Make your own non-toxic cleaners.**
- Participate in a **citizen science project.**
- Promote bat populations by building and/or installing a bat house.**
- Use **refillable binders** instead of notebooks or **use a laptop to take notes.**
- Use washable cloth napkins** rather than paper napkins.
- Participate in an adopt-the-roadway campaign** to clean trash from a roadside in your town or neighborhood.
- Today's modern dishwashers are more effective cleaners, meaning you can **skip the rinsing step** to save water.
- Rather than buying single-serving containers, **buy bulk products and dole out individual portions into reusable containers.**
- Make a mess? **Use a washable cloth to clean it up** rather than paper towels.
- Seek out a volunteer opportunity to support an environmental issue that is important to you.**
- Turn the water off when you brush your teeth.**
- Grabbing a latte at your favorite cafe? **Bring your own reusable travel mug.**
- When decluttering or cleaning out your closets, make a donation pile or host a yard sale** rather than throwing everything into the trash.
- Combine multiple errands into a single trip.**
- Make meals using leftovers** rather than letting food go to waste.
- Plant a tree.**
- Turn old t-shirts into cleaning rags.**
- Read magazines online or subscribe to e-versions.**
- Join a community garden.**
- Spend a portion of every day outside in the fresh air.**

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