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9 ways to have a more eco-friendly bathroom

Hoping to cut your environmental impact with small habit changes? Try these top bathroom tips

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Making small changes to your habits can be a simple way to cut your carbon footprint. And there's nowhere you're more likely to be running on autopilot than in the bathroom.

Our bathroom habits use up water and energy - which is currently still very expensive - and that's before you think about the amount of plastic and other chemical products that go into toiletries.

You already know not to let your tap run while you're brushing your teeth, but there are plenty of other actions you can take to reduce your environmental impact, many of which could also save you money on water and energy bills.

Here are some relatively low-effort ways to get started. Why not try introducing some of them into your daily routine?

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1. Save water in your bathroom

Spend less time showering



The majority of adults in the UK shower rather than bathe now. Showers use less water than baths, but, nevertheless, showers are the biggest cause of water use in the home, says the Energy Savings Trust.




Thames Water calculates that a 10-minute shower can use 100 litres of water. If a family of four were to cut showering time by just one minute per person, it could save as much as 11,648 litres of water a year. That's a water bill saving of £45. Plus, you'll save on the energy used to heat the water.

If you tend to lose track of time in the shower, try installing a shower timer (which you can buy for less than £5).




Try showering less often, too. Nivea recommends reducing your showers to once every two days as you get older, as too-frequent showering will lead to dryer and more irritated skin.

And try washing your hair less often, which will save on shampoo as well as shower time. How often you need to wash your hair depends on your hair density, thickness and porosity, according to Nivea. Leaving more time between washes will help your hair stay strong and retain a healthy level of moisture.

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-  How to update your bathroom on a budget
-  Tips for keeping your bathroom in good shape
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Plus, cleaning your shower head of limescale could actually help you save water and money too.

Read more: [how to reduce the cost of having a shower](#)

Install water-saving devices in your bathroom



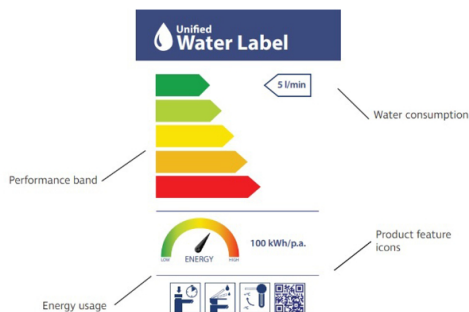
Consider fitting a water-saving shower head, which will control the flow and spray pattern of the water to give the impression of a powerful shower while using water wisely.

Head to our [eco shower heads buying guide](#) to find out more about these, and about why power showers are the worst for water use. Note that you shouldn't use an eco shower head with an electric shower.

Keep an eye out for the Unified Water Label when buying new bathroom fixtures and fittings. The Unified Water Label is a voluntary labelling scheme, developed by the European bathroom industry, to help consumers across Europe and the UK choose water-saving products more easily.

You can find this label on shower parts, taps, toilets, baths, flow regulators and other bathroom products and the [Unified Water Label](#) has its own online shop.

Here's how to read a Unified Water Label:



If you're refurbishing your bathroom, consider replacing your single flush toilet with a dual-flush toilet.

The UWLA (Unified Water Label Association) estimates that 80% of the time you'll only need to use the shorter flush, saving, on average, up to three litres per flush.

Fix dripping taps and leaking toilets promptly


A single dripping tap will waste around 90 litres of water each week – approximately 46,80 litres every year, says the UWLA. Thames Water says that a trickling toilet leak could waste up to 200 litres per day, while a major leak could waste as much as 800 litres a day.

Find out more about [keeping your bathroom in good shape](#) and avoiding small problems escalating into bigger ones. If you can't fix the leak yourself, call a Trusted Trader to sort it out for you.

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What do you need?

Where are you looking?



2. Switch toilet roll, and use less of it





Unsustainable forestry is a major cause of deforestation, leading to biodiversity loss, soil erosion, species extinction, and ecosystem disruptions. The WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature, formerly World Wildlife Fund) says that the biggest driver of deforestation is agriculture, but that growing demand for wood and timber is also a big threat to the world's forests. According to the WWF, with demand for paper products increasing, global production could double by 2050.

Canopy, a not-for-profit environmental organization dedicated to protecting forests, species and climate, says that we need to reduce our reliance on new timber for paper, packaging and viscose by 50%.

The pulp and paper industry is also among the most energy-intensive industries, responsible for around 2% of industrial CO2 emissions, and can use a significant amount of water.

Using paper only fleetingly, as toilet paper, isn't ideal. Recycled toilet paper is typically a more sustainable material. Historically, recycled toilet paper had a reputation for being rougher and less absorbent, but this isn't always the case.

Try using less toilet roll as well. Each year we use 127 rolls of toilet paper per person, according to subscription toilet roll brand Who Gives a Crap.

If you habitually grab a handful of sheets and scrunch them up before using them, you're likely using more than you actually need. Try paying attention to how many squares you're using and see if you can get by with less paper.

Whether buying traditional or recycled toilet paper, choose rolls with more sheets if you can. This means fewer inner cardboard tubes need to be used and thrown away, and make transportation more efficient.

You could even eschew toilet roll altogether and invest in reusable wipes. These don't necessarily need to be washed separately to your regular laundry. Cheeky Wipes, for instance, sell a hygienic storage system designed to hold your used wipes until such time as you run your next wash, at which point they can go in together with your other items. Be sure to follow the recommended hygiene instructions of whichever manufacturer you go with.

Or you could install either a standalone bidet, or a handheld bidet attachment to your toilet, also called a bidet shower. While most people in the UK default to toilet roll, many people across the world use water instead.

3. Avoid using make-up remover wipes

They might be convenient, but wipes should be avoided as much as possible. Many dermatologists and beauty experts say they're not great for your skin anyway, leading to dehydration in the long-term.

Plenty of beauty brands make reusable make-up wipes that can be washed over and over, often with pretty designs. It's also easy to make your own: if you're good at crafting there are plenty of videos online showing you how to do so.

Above all, don't flush make-up wipes down the toilet, where they can end up stuck in the sewage network as fatbergs, clogging our sewage systems. Putting them in the bin is better; avoiding them (and single use cotton balls, too) entirely is best.

Find out more: about [buying water-friendly products](#)

4. Recycle your bathroom packaging

One simple step you can take is to get a recycling bin for your bathroom.

Rather than trying to remember to act more sustainably every day, making it an easy habit is much more likely to stick long term. You're more likely to remember to recycle plastic if the bin is right where you need it. So adding a small extra bin in the bathroom reduces the chances of you absent-mindedly chucking your finished shampoo bottles in with landfill waste in your general bathroom bin.

If you don't have the floor space, try hanging a cloth bag over a towel hook on your door and using that to collect your recyclables, which will also keep your bathroom looking tidy.

Our guide to [how to recycle in the UK](#) can help you differentiate between recyclable and non-recyclable bathroom waste.

5. Buy bulk refills of shampoo and shower gel





Even if you're carefully recycling everything you can, many toiletries come in complex containers that aren't easily recyclable: metal spring pumps in bottles of hand soap, for example. The complexities involved in recycling mean that we should all be reducing and reusing our plastics, where possible, before recycling.

There's also the issue of transport. The shape of some toiletry containers leads to wasted space in the trucks transporting them. Water weight is another factor impacting transport emissions.

All of this adds up to make it hard for people at home to clearly determine what's best. A plastic pouch, for example, might be harder to recycle but weigh less than a bottle with a rigid plastic structure and take up less lorry space during transportation.

Refillables tend to be better than their single-use equivalents. Buying a large bottle of shampoo or shower gel from a brand such as [Faith in Nature](#) and decanting it into a smaller bottle to use in the shower could save you money, and significantly cut back your plastic use. Alternatively, [Lush](#) says that 66% of its products are 'naked', and don't need any packaging.

Find out more about [Faith in Nature](#), [Lush](#) and other [green brands](#).

We've looked in depth at [how to shop for refillable toiletries](#) and avoid common pitfalls that might undermine your environmental efforts.

Don't forget the [environmental impact of your bathroom cleaning products](#). Discover [which bathroom cleaning sprays are best for the environment](#) and earn our Eco Buy endorsement

6. Use solid soap and shampoo bars

Try switching away from liquid toiletries to a packaging-free solid bar or a bar wrapped in easily recyclable paper or cardboard. Many popular brands now make these, so you'll find them easily in supermarkets, chemists and zero-waste shops as well as online.

Solid shampoo can take a while to get used to. You may need to use your new shampoo bar a few times or even try different ones before you find the right product and routine for you: some people find their hair feels waxy or greasier than normal at first when they switch, for example.

Follow the instructions closely: with many brands you only need to use a small amount, so you won't get as much lather as you're probably used to.

[Green brands](#): what to look out for to make sustainable choices

7. Cut down on the toiletries you're using



For any frequently used and thrown-away product, the best thing to do, before you get to the reusing or recycling stage, is to reduce how much you're using in the first place.

Think carefully about what you're buying. The beauty industry in particular is notorious for encouraging overconsumption by introducing an ever-growing list of 'must-have' products, many of which tap into our natural insecurities by promising to solve problems we didn't even know we had to worry about.

Think about whether the hair or skincare product you're about to buy is genuinely something you need. Asking yourself this question every time won't just be better for the planet: it will save you money and help you push back against brands' marketing efforts.

Having less clutter in your bathroom will also help you keep it tidy and clean.

To reduce how much plastic you're throwing away, consider how much of each product you're using each time. Most of us are guilty of using too much shampoo, face wash or shower gel. Check how much the manufacturer actually recommends you use. You could be making your hair or skin look worse instead of better by using too much product. Using less will make the product last longer and send less of it into our waterways each time.

If you're having a grand clear-out of toiletries you no longer want, don't just sweep them into the bin if there's a decent amount left in them. Consider donating them via Toiletries Amnesty, an NGO supporting homeless shelters and hostels, women's refuges, mental health services, food banks, refugee support services and other community groups. Part-used items are fine, so long as they're at least half full and in date (no used razors or toothbrushes).

Use the [Toiletries Amnesty directory](#) to find your nearest donation point.

8. Switch to reusable menstrual products



200,000 tonnes of menstrual products go to landfill every year, says City to Sea, the charity behind the Plastic-Free Periods campaign. Switching to reusables means more washing, but makes a significant difference across your lifetime and could well save you money.

A word of warning here: we have found that some reusable menstrual products contain silver. Experts we spoke to suggest silver is at best an unnecessary extra, and at worst may have as yet unknown health implications.

Read more about our investigation into [silver in period pants](#).

Silver is sometimes declared on the packaging: if it isn't, check the manufacturer's website, as sometimes this information is buried. If in doubt, ask, or opt for a brand that specifically says it doesn't use silver.

Find out more: the best [reusable period pants](#) and [menstrual cups](#).

9. Make your hot water system more efficient

The Energy Savings Trust says that around 12% of the average heating bill relates to heating water.

When showering, try turning down your temperature slightly to save on hot water. It could improve your skin, too, as prolonged exposure to hot showers can strip your skin of essential oils.

If you have a combi boiler, turn off the pre-heat function if it has one. This function ensures you always have hot water at the ready, which sounds convenient but isn't efficient. Turning this function off means that the boiler will only ignite to warm the water once the tap is opened. Delivery of hot water to the tap will take a little longer, but you'll save energy by not keeping the boiler preheated.

You can also adjust the temperature of the hot water coming out of your combi boiler in its settings, so you're using less energy to heat it up. This is only appropriate if you have a combi boiler, and no hot water tank, as stored hot water needs to reach a certain temperature to avoid the risk of Legionella growth.

If you do have a hot water tank, consider insulating it if it's an older model. Modern hot water tanks will already have insulation. Less heat loss from your hot water tank means you spend less money heating water up, and your hot water stays hotter for longer. You can buy a hot water jacket for as little as £20 and fit it yourself without needing a professional.

Find out more about [how boiler controls can save you money](#).

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