

TOP 5 WAYS TO LIVE GREEN NOW

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Take a 5 minute shower

Reducing your shower time to 5 minutes saves thousands of gallons of water over the course of a year. The best way to develop this habit is to bring an egg timer into the bathroom with you, set it for 5 minutes and see where you are in your bathing process when it goes off. Even if you don't "beat the clock" at first, you will become conscious of the impending buzz and become more and more efficient as time goes by.

Reuse shopping bags

It is estimated that the US consumes between 100 and 500 BILLION plastic bags per year. Bags ending up in a landfill are only a small part of the problem. The production of plastic bags takes water, energy and oil as does the transportation of those bags. We can reduce this consumption by utilizing reusable shopping bags

Try buying three bags at your regular grocery store, they should cost about 99 cents each. Whenever you use them, get in the habit of emptying them out in the kitchen and immediately taking them back to your car and putting them in the back seat or trunk. This will help eliminate the most common reason for not using them- which is forgetting the bags at home. Look for the "bag credit" of 5 cents many grocery stores offer to those of us with reusable shopping bags.

Unplug those gadgets

Take a look at your office area or kitchen counter...like most people, you probably leave many items throughout your home plugged in all the time.

Leaving the coffee pot, toaster and cell phone chargers plugged into the wall outlets 24/7 is the same as allowing your faucets drip. Even if the power button is off, energy is leaking away and taking your money with it.

Stop this waste by unplugging those appliances, gadgets and lamps that you're not using. Plugging in when you need to use that toaster will require some getting used to, but be assured, this simple action is making a positive difference.

Use a travel mug

365 paper or styrofoam cups is a lot of material to leave in a landfill!

There is a lot of controversy as to whether the use of a ceramic mug or plastic travel mug is actually more "green" than paper cups. The jury is pretty much in, that the energy saved over the life of a reusable beverage container far outweighs the energy spent producing disposables. So find that perfect travel mug and USE IT. Much like the use of a shopping bag, this habit can be hard to adopt.

If you take your morning coffee into the office- wash the travel mug there and leave it in your car. If you need to bring it into the house for a wash, leave it with your car keys, or stash it in the pocket your coat.

Dunkin Donuts charges an average \$1.95 for a medium coffee and \$1.73 to fill a 16 oz travel mug. That means you could save over \$57 on your annual coffee bill by using the travel mug.

Use cloth napkins

Adopting the use of cloth napkins over paper towels and napkins is the easiest and quickest green change you can make.

Buy at least 4 napkins per person in the house and buy them all in plain white cotton. It's fun to have those coordinating colors, but when you're truly interested in conservation, practicality must trump whimsy. A few reasons to go with plain white napkins:

- ❖ They will coordinate with almost everything, they can be thrown in the wash with almost any load and be bleach as often as necessary.
- ❖ You can grab as many as you need from your pile of napkins without worrying about matching them to each other.
- ❖ You can use them for just about anything you would use a paper towel for including clean up.

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