

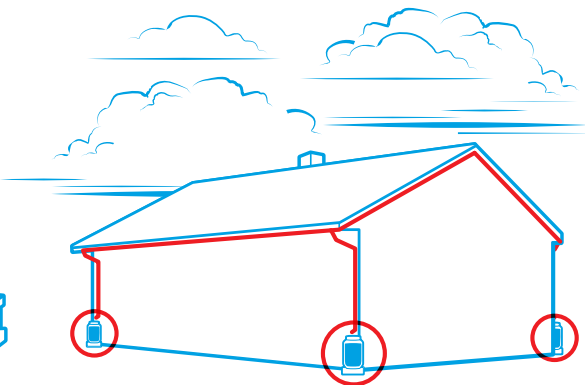
**TREAT THE EARTH
WELL: IT WAS NOT
GIVEN TO YOU BY
YOUR PARENTS,
IT WAS LOANED
TO YOU BY YOUR
CHILDREN.**

— Ancient proverb

For more information, please go to
www.americanwaymag.com

**FIFTY
THINGS
YOU
CAN DO**

**Ready to make a difference?
Here's a list, for starters.**



For more details, see the City of Bremerton, Washington, website at www.cityofbremerton.com/content/sw_makeyourownrainbarrel.html

Don't use antibacterial products, as they encourage the growth of resistant microbes. Hot, soapy water is just as effective at nixing germs.



Don't be embarrassed by your late-model car, your old lawn furniture, the shirt you've had since college, the dress from last year's Fourth of July party. The greenest product is the kind you already own. *Reduce* is the first of the three Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle) for a reason.

Choose a green option — recycled, organic, sustainable materials, etc. — when you're replacing something or when you're buying consumables like food and office supplies.

Leave your reusable grocery bags in the car so you don't forget them. Visit www.reusablebags.com to find ultracompact, roll-into-a-tiny-cylinder versions that fit in your car's glove compartment.

Wash your clothes in cold water. Run only full loads.

Once a week — or once a month at first — take a consumer-culture holiday. Don't drive anywhere; don't buy anything.

How to Collect Rainwater

- If you already have a sloped roof, gutters, and downspouts, you're halfway there.
- Start with a 55-gallon, food-grade recycled-plastic barrel.
- Cut a six-inch hole on top of the barrel and drill two holes in its side: one near the top for overflow and one near the bottom for a spigot.
- Attach a threaded hose adapter to the uppermost hole in the barrel's side. Slide a hose into the adapter to direct overflow away from your foundation.
- Attach your spigot to the lower hole, using Teflon tape or caulking to seal.
- Cover the six-inch hole in the top with a six-inch louvered screen, with the louvered side up.
- Set the entire rain barrel on a base of stones, blocks, or landscape timbers next to a downspout.
- Cut the downspout to hang about four inches above the top of the barrel. Add an elbow or downspout extender to divert water into the six-inch hole in your barrel.
- Attach a garden hose to the spigot. Gravity will force the water through the hose.
- If you're really ambitious, you can add another barrel or two to collect the overflow, and then repeat the whole installation for every downspout at your house.

Fill your gas tank in the morning or evening rather than in the daytime. Less gas will evaporate from your open tank when it's cool outside, cutting down on emissions.

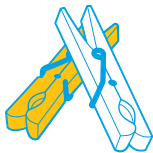
You've already inflated your tires properly, stopped punching the accelerator, and switched off the A/C whenever possible. Now increase your vehicle's gas mileage even more by using multigrade motor oil and removing the ski or bike rack when the season's over.

Find someone to share a ride to the airport, stadium, or entertainment venue at www.rideamigos.com.

Download the Environmental Working Group's list of high- and low-pesticide produce at www.foodnews.org, and then shop accordingly.

Lobby your schools to get at least a few local foods on the menu.

Put up a clothesline. Line-dried laundry will save you energy, last longer, and smell better. Plus, no chemical-laden dryer sheets.



Save water and the energy it takes to heat it by setting a waterproof timer for your shower. ShowerWatch, \$35, www.halfateaspoon.com



Try grass-fed beef, preferably from a farm in your area. Grass-fed cattle typically require fewer antibiotics because they're not kept in densely packed feedlots, and they carry less E. coli. Plus, their meat is lower in saturated fat and higher in a number of nutrients. Find out more at www.americangrassfed.org.



Don't flush unused meds; keep them in their containers and throw them away. A recent study showed 24 cities found pharmaceuticals in their water supplies.

If your fridge was made before 2000, replace it with a new Energy Star model. Older refrigerators are huge electricity hogs.

Eat fewer packaged and processed foods. They require more energy to make, and they generate more waste than the unprocessed alternatives.

How to Do an Energy Audit of Your Home

Want to reduce your carbon footprint? You can turn off lights and program your thermostat, sure, but you could have the biggest impact on your energy use — and energy bills — by conducting your own energy audit.

- Look for and seal any air leaks. Just by reducing drafts, you could save 30 percent or more a year. Prime spots for leakage: window frames, electrical outlets, switch plates, doors, attic hatches, window or wall-mounted air conditioners, fireplace dampers, cracks along baseboards, and gaps where the walls meet the ceiling.
- Check for daylight around doors and windows; see if windows rattle in their frames.
- Inspect the outside of your house for gaps wherever two



building materials meet, such as foundation and exterior brick, siding and chimneys, and all exterior corners.

■ Can't find any leaks? Do a building pressurization test. Close all exterior doors, windows, and flues; turn off gas fireplaces, stoves, and water heaters; turn on all exhaust fans that blow air outside, most commonly found in the bathroom or kitchen. This sucks air into the house from outside, making leaks easier to detect. Use a lit incense stick to find the drafts.

■ Seal any holes you find with caulking, stripping, or another appropriate material. Be careful not to seal your home too tightly. Oil furnaces and woodstoves, for instance, require air to burn.

■ Check the insulation in your attic, walls, and basement (if your basement isn't insulated, check the ground floor). You'll have to get up close and personal by removing switch plates or outlet covers to check wall insulation. While you're at it, make sure your attic hatch is as well insulated as the rest of the attic.

■ Make sure all your lightbulbs are the correct wattage; replace burned-out bulbs with energy-saving alternatives such as CFLs or LEDs.

■ Want a web-based walk-through of your energy usage and possible savings? Use the Home Energy Saver at <http://hes.lbl.gov>.

Opt out of receiving a hard-copy telephone book. For Verizon, you can call (800) 888-8448. For AT&T, call (800) 792-2665. For the Yellow Book, call (800) 373-3280. For Qwest Dex, call (877) 243-8339. Use an online directory instead; try www.dexpages.com or www.411.com.



Take the one-mile challenge. If your destination is within a mile of your home, walk there.

Fill your refrigerator and freezer; don't overstuff it. If you're low on food, put water pitchers on shelves and freeze water in empty milk cartons. Having more cold items inside helps insulate the interior and keep it chilled.

Don't throw anything that's potentially usable away before offering it to others (for free!). Even broken stuff might find a new home with a handy person.

Instead of buying a cleaning product — even a green one — see if you can do the job with vinegar or baking soda.

Download music, TV shows, and movies instead of buying

Revamp Your Bathroom

Just by replacing the fixtures in your bathroom, you can save gallons of water, since bathrooms account for 75 percent of a home's water use. That's good news for you — as water and sewage bills will be lower — and for the environment.

- Put an aerator on your faucet to get maximum flow with minimum water usage.
- Replace your old toilet with a low-flow model. Even better, get a dual-flush version.
- If your house is relatively new, your showerhead may already be a low-flow model.

or renting CDs or DVDs. E-copies save packaging and gas money.

Run the dishwasher only when there's a full load, and scrape (rather than rinse) dishes before you load them.

To cut back on ironing, hang your clothes when they're still warm from the dryer. Or just wear them wrinkled. A typical iron draws 10 to 18 times more energy than a 100-watt, non-CFL lightbulb.

Switch to recycled-paper towels. If everyone did, a million tons of paper would be kept out of the waste stream. Two good ones to try, according to a recent user test: Whole Foods' in-house brand 365 Everyday Value (\$1.39) and Seventh Generation Natural (\$2.50).

Use cloth napkins. Get personalized napkin rings so your family's dainty eaters can reuse theirs. Buy vintage at tag sales and resale shops for the ultimate green move, or choose organic cotton, hemp, and bamboo versions.

Your DVD player, game system, stereo, microwave, printer, computer, and more all draw power when they're not being used. Your cell phone and MP3 chargers suck electricity even when they're not plugged in. Use power strips and flip the switch to off when they're idle. For your office, try APC's Power-Saving Essential SurgeArrest (about \$30), which automatically powers down peripherals whenever the computer goes to sleep.

Put a list on your fridge of these eight environmental troublemakers: milk, peanut butter, baby food, ketchup, cottonseed oil, corn and its by-products, beef, and soy. Conventional versions of these pollute the planet (and sometimes you too). Each month, pick one and either buy organic or plan your menus without it. Tip: You'll have to read the ingredients on food labels. (See www.grist.org)



To check, place a bucket in the shower and turn on the water at normal pressure for one minute. Measure how much water there is. If there's more than 2.2 gallons, you need a new showerhead. Bricor has a gallon-per-minute version, and Real Goods has a 1.2-gal-

lon model with a pause button to stop the water while you're soaping up or shampooing. ■ Fix any leaky faucets, running toilets, and dripping showerheads immediately. A leaky toilet can waste a whopping 600 gallons a month, and a dripping faucet can waste

2,700 gallons a year.

■ Install an Aqus Toilet System, which takes the gray water from your bathroom sink for use in toilet flushing, saving 10 to 20 gallons a day in a two-person household. The system's pump uses just 50 cents' worth of electricity a year.

Plant butterfly- and bee-friendly shrubs and flowers in your backyard.



Instead of recycling unwanted catalogs, stop them in their tracks at www.catalogchoice.com.



Charge your cell phone or media player with solar or wind power with the HYmini. Just attach it to your arm or your bike. No, we're not kidding. Basic package, \$50, www.hymini.com



Go to a commercial car wash (water usage: roughly 37 gallons) instead of scrubbing down your vehicle in your driveway (water usage: 80 to 100 gallons).

Heat water for your tea in the microwave, not on the stovetop. It uses about 80 percent less energy.

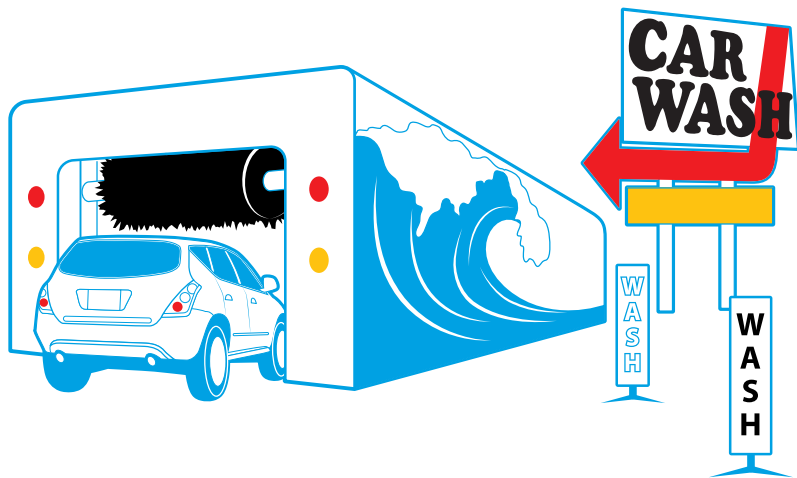
Keep a pitcher of tap water in the fridge and grab a glassful instead of a bottle of water.

Join an organic CSA (community-supported agriculture). For a weekly, monthly, or even one up-front payment, you'll get fresh, in-season organic produce — and sometimes meat, eggs, and dairy — all season long. No carbon guilt from buying shipped veggies, no pesticide guilt (because much of the produce is organic). Positive side effect: the feel-good vibe of supporting small farms. Visit www.localharvest.org for CSA listings in your area.

How to Recycle Your Electronics

Cell phones, computers, printers, batteries — they all contain hazardous substances that make sending them to the average landfill a dicey proposition. But sometimes it's not easy to figure out what to do with them. Help has arrived.

■ Is your computer less than five years old and still working?



Donate it. You can find a recipient via the National Cristina Foundation, www.cristina.org. Some Goodwill sites also accept computers; check with your local store.

- Are your electronics too old or not working? See if your city maintains a collection facility for electronics. Call your local officials, visit the electronics section at www.recyclingcenters.org, or search by zip code at www.mygreenelectronics.org.
- Most major computer companies have nationwide mail-back programs. For a fee, they'll send you a prepaid mailing label or let you print one from their website. Lenovo allows you to recycle any manufacturer's PCs, monitors, and attachments for \$30 (including shipping); HP will take any brand of cell phone, computer, printer, scanner, fax machine, and so on. Fees apply to some. Apple and Dell will recycle your products for free if you buy one of their computers; otherwise, they'll do it for the cost of shipping. For more information, visit www.electronicsrecycling.org and click on E-cycling Options.
- Retailers such as Staples, Circuit City, and Best Buy run electronics-recycling programs; Staples will even take your used ink-jet and toner cartridges. For more information, check the retailers' websites or visit www.epa.gov/rcc/plugin/.
- Cell phone manufacturers and wireless providers will accept your cell phone for recycling; Motorola and Nokia will recycle all brands for free.
- You can look for an electronics-recycling event in your area at www.eiae.org.

When you shop, think about packaging. The less packaging, the better. For example, buy loose-leaf tea instead of tea bags and a bag of sugar rather than individual packets.

Another sports season, another batch of equipment. Buy resale at used-equipment shops or on Craigslist; get it gratis, if you're lucky, at Freecycle. Buying new? Check out Fair Trade Sports (www.fairtradesports.com) for FSC-certified soccer balls, footballs, basketballs, and more.

Forego kitty litters made with clay — which is strip-mined — and use Yesterday's News (recycled newspaper), Feline Pine (pellets recycled from lumber by-products), or another eco-friendly alternative.

Compost, either with a simple pile in a corner of the backyard or with a more elaborate garden-center product. Live in an apartment? Put a Worm Factory or NatureMill compact composter under the kitchen sink. www.cascadewormbin.com, www.naturemill.com

Grow tomatoes in containers on your porch or balcony. Consider landscaping with edible plants in your yard. You won't have to drive to a store, where you'd likely get produce that was trucked in from hundreds or thousands of miles away.

Insulate your water heater. If you've already done that, insulate the hot-water pipes running through your house. (We don't have to remind you to turn the temp down, too, do we?)

You know all about CFLs. Now there's the EarthLED Evolux — no mercury, same wattage, two-year warranty, and it lasts five times as long. Downside: It's \$90. But, again, it lasts five times as long as a CFL. (Or just wait. LED lighting is on a learning curve; prices are sure to come down.)

For more ideas and habit-breaking help, join a carbon-dieting support group. Entire communities, businesses, and schools are participating. www.empowermentinstitute.net

TRACY STATON is a contributing editor to *American Way*.

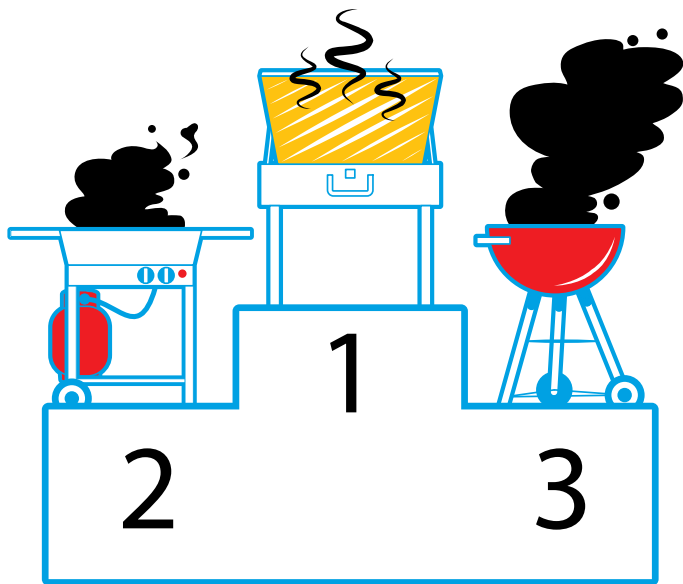


How to Compost

■ Kitchen scraps account for about 25 percent of landfill trash. Save that space and turn your cores and peelings into plant food. First, set up your pile or bin. It can be as simple as a spot in the backyard encircled with hardware cloth to

keep out pests, or as elaborate as a recycled-plastic bin on a stand that makes turning and mixing easier.

■ Collect your kitchen waste in a pail or crock indoors (some come with charcoal odor filters). The smaller the pieces, the quicker they'll compost.



Use a gas grill instead of charcoal, which produces 105 times more carbon monoxide. Or choose a greener briquette such as Cowboy Charcoal. Even better, try a solar cooker.

Leave out high-fat items like peanut butter, meat scraps, and salad dressings.

- Dump regularly. Bury any dairy products deep within the pile to avoid attracting animals. Add grass clippings, dead leaves, and pine needles. The latter two should be chopped

or shredded first.

- Wood ashes are okay to add in small amounts, but don't add charcoal remnants.
- Aged manure is great, but leave out pet droppings.
- Ideally, you'll have a balance of "green" ingredients such as grass clippings, produce

scraps, manure, and coffee grounds, and "brown" ones such as dead leaves and twigs.

- Turn the pile occasionally to speed up the process.
- Compost is ready when it's dark brown, crumbly, and earthy-smelling, and when the ingredients aren't identifiable.