Steps to a Smaller Footprint

Energy

Program your thermostat to a warmer setting

In the summer, turning your thermostat up a few degrees can reduce the amount of time you run your air conditioner, saving electricity and reducing emissions.

Wear layers and use blankets

Instead of using an electric heater or fireplace, stay warm by putting on more layers and closing windows to keep heat in your home to save electricity.

Wash your clothes in cold water

By washing your clothes using cold water, you save the energy used to heat the water during the wash cycle and reduce your carbon emissions.

Hang your clothes to dry

Allow your clothes to air dry or dry them on a lower-temperature cycle when you do laundry to save electricity and reduce your carbon emissions.

Spend an hour outside

Doing the things you normally do inside—like reading, studying, or relaxing—outside under natural light will save electricity and reduce your emissions.

Skip TV today

Avoiding TV for the day reduces your energy use, emissions, and time spent indoors; instead, try a lower-energy alternative like walking outside or reading a book or magazine.

Unplug your printer

Unplug your rarely-used appliances, like your printer, to save energy and reduce your carbon emissions. Make sure frequently-used appliances are off when not in use.

Unplug your phone charger

Unplug your phone and laptop chargers when your devices are fully-charged or not in use to save electricity, save money and reduce your carbon emissions.

Food

Go meat-free today
Swap meat today for vegetables, grains, and non-meat proteins, like beans, lentils, or pulses to cut back on your carbon emissions and water usage.

Go dairy-free today
Swap milk and cheese for nut, hemp, and oat milk products to cut back on your carbon emissions and the amount of land destroyed by livestock grazing.

Eat local produce
Eat locally-grown fruits, vegetables, and meats today to reduce the distance your food has to travel and cut down on its carbon emissions.

Visit the farmers' market
Buy produce and products at your local farmers' market to reduce your food miles and help strengthen small farmers and businesses in your community.

Eat vegan today
Skip the meat, dairy, and eggs today and opt for beans, vegetables, fruits, and grains instead to cut back on your carbon emissions.

Buy organic produce
Eat organic, sustainably-grown produce to reduce pesticide and fertilizer use and runoff, cut back on your carbon emissions, and support small farmers.

Cook dinner at home
Cook dinner at home to reduce your travel distance, waste from disposable containers, and minimize your carbon emissions—plus, you'll save money.

Try lentils, beans, or pulses today
Try substituting lentils, beans, or other pulses for the protein needs of one of your meals today instead of meat or animal-based protein.

Try leafy greens today
Try eating more leafy greens today to reduce your carbon emissions from animal-based products and increase your intake of essential vitamins and minerals.

Transport

Walk to work today

Walk to school or work today instead of driving to cut back on air pollution, carbon emissions, and wear and tear on your vehicle. Plus, you'll save money, too.

Bike to work today

Bike to school or work today instead of driving to cut back on air pollution, carbon emissions, and wear and tear on your vehicle. Plus, you'll save money, too.

Carpool with a friend today

Take a ride with a friend or coworker today instead of driving your car solo; you'll save gas, emissions, and money, plus have time to relax before your day starts.

Take transit to work today

Take the bus or subway to work today instead of driving your car to cut back on air pollution, carbon emissions, and wear and tear on your vehicle.

Take a hike

Instead of spending time inside today, take a few hours to explore a local trail or park. You'll save energy, reduce stress, and stay more physically active.

Take a walk outside

Take a break from working on your computer inside and spend 30 minutes walking around your neighborhood to save energy and reduce stress.

Explore your town by bike

Hop on your bike and ride around your neighborhood or larger community today instead of spending time indoors to cut back on your emissions.

Consider an electric vehicle

Looking to buy a new car soon? Consider a battery electric or fuel-cell vehicle, or better yet, consider skipping the car entirely in favor of public transit.

Switch to an electric vehicle

Trade in your gasoline or diesel car for one that's battery or fuel-cell electric to eliminate your transportation emissions and save hundreds each year.

Home

Switch to LED bulbs

Swap one of your light bulbs to LED to dramatically reduce your electricity use, carbon emissions, and total electricity bill over the next few years.

Program your LED bulbs

Set up your LED bulbs with a smart home hub or program them using your bulb manufacturer's controls to automatically save energy when you're not home.

Use natural light instead

During the day, use light from windows and natural sources instead of turning on indoor lighting to reduce your electricity use and carbon emissions.

Turn off outside lights

Make sure your outdoor lights (by your garage, patio, or other outdoor areas) are turned off during the day to avoid wasting energy and reduce your emissions.

Keep your freezer full

Make sure your freezer is fully-stocked; full freezers use less energy to stay cool, reducing your emissions and saving on your electricity bill.

Fill your dishwasher before running

Make sure you only run your dishwasher when it's full to save energy, reduce your water use and cut back on your carbon emissions.

Air dry your dishes

Use a towel to hand-dry or leave your dishes to air dry instead of drying them with a dishwasher cycle to save energy and cut back on your emissions.

Close your blinds

Keep the blinds on the sun-facing side of your house closed during the day to keep your house cooler, reducing your energy use and carbon emissions.

Water

Shower instead of bathe

Taking a short shower instead of a bath signifi-cantly reduces your water and energy usage, leaving you just as clean and refreshed as taking a bath does.

Take a five-minute shower

Cutting the time you spend showering back to five minutes or less saves energy and water, reducing your carbon emissions and saving you time.

Turn off the water while soaping up

Turning off the water while you soap up in the shower saves energy and water, reducing the carbon emissions generated by heating water you don't actually use.

Install a low-flow shower head

Swapping your standard showerhead for a low-flow one dramatically reduces your water usage without any reduction in shower comfort and effectiveness.

Turn off the tap

Turning off the tap while you brush your teeth reduces the amount of water you use and cuts back on wasted water and energy you never actually use.

Skip washing your car

Washing your car wastes water that could be better used in your home and produces runoff that carries pollutants from your car and the street into the environment.

Water landscaping by hand

Instead of relying on sprinkler systems, water your garden or yard by hand to save water and reduce runoff. Even better, consider installing a precision irrigation system.

Say no to bottled water

Bringing your own bottle and declining water provided in disposable plastic bottles reduces landfill waste and minimizes the resources need-ed to create disposable plastics.

Invest in a water filter

Instead of opting to buy packaged prefiltered water, consider purchasing a home or pitcher water filter instead to reduce landfill waste and save money over time.

Land

Plant a tree
Plant a tree in your yard, at a neighbor's, or in your community; trees pull carbon emissions out of the air, retain water and soil, and cool their surrounding environment.

Start a garden
The best way to reduce your food miles is to grow it yourself—starting a garden helps restore soil fertility, reduces your emissions, and can even save water if managed properly.

Sign up for a community garden plot
If you don't have enough space to have your own garden at home, consider growing food in a community garden plot to help restore the soil and reduce your emissions.

Use only recycled paper
Commit to printing on and purchasing only recycled paper to reduce your consumption of raw materials and water and slow deforestation to produce paper products.

Print less
Before you print anything today, see if you can use a digital substitute instead to reduce your paper usage and slow the deforestation needed to produce paper products.

Switch to paperless billing
Reduce your paper consumption—and save time and effort—by switching to paperless or automatic digital payments to cut back on emissions and slow deforestation.

Borrow versus buy your books
Cut back on your paper use and slow deforestation by borrowing books from the local library versus buying them new. Or switch to e-books to eliminate paper entirely.

Plant native plants
Use plants native to where you live to landscape your yard, or donate a plant to a neighbor to help restore soil fertility and help ecosystems rebound from human development.

Purchase only certified products
Swap conventional products like palm oil and paper for sustainably-sourced ones to slow deforestation, reduce emissions, and restore degraded ecosystems.

Waste

Recycle paper

Recycle all your used paper products—like printer paper, junk mail, and cardboard—to slow deforestation and reduce your energy usage and carbon emissions.

Recycle plastic

Recycle all your used plastic products—like bags, packaging, and bottles—to eliminate the need for fossil fuels and reduce your energy usage and carbon emissions.

Compost food waste

Compost your used fruit, vegetable, meat, and other food scraps with paper and soil to reduce your methane emissions, landfill contributions, and restore soil fertility.

Drop off e-waste for recycling

Instead of throwing away used tech devices or appliances, donate them to be recycled through a community e-waste dropoff program to reduce emissions and resource use.

Start a community recycling program

Many products that aren't typically recycled locally, like toothpaste tubes or chip bags, can be mailed in instead—start collecting with your neighbors to save resources and reduce emissions.

Have a shopping-free day

Avoiding buying things you might not need—especially non-consumable products like clothes—reduces the need for resources and eliminates future waste entirely.

Buy locally-made goods

Buying goods made by local companies or artisans instead of commercial versions reduces the distance your products travel, cuts emissions, and supports your community.

Buy Fair Trade Certified products

Fair trade products are verified to ensure their production doesn't promote deforestation or threaten animal habitat and guarantees fair wages and safe working conditions.

Bring your own cup

Bring your own reusable cup or mug for coffee and water to reduce your resource use and cut back on your carbon emissions and disposable waste.

Bring your own utensils

Bring your own reusable fork, spoon, and knife set to reduce your resource use and cut back on your carbon emissions and disposable waste.

Bring your own straw

Bring your own reusable straw and cup to reduce your resource use and cut back on your carbon emissions and disposable waste.

Pack your own lunch for work

Packing your own lunch for work eliminates disposable waste generated by takeout containers, cuts back on your food waste, and reduces carbon emissions.

Bring your own shopping bags

Bring your own reusable shopping and produce bags to reduce your resource use and cut back on your carbon emissions and disposable waste.

Repair or donate worn-out clothes

Instead of throwing out worn or out of style clothing, give it a second life by repairing it or donating it to those in need to reduce waste and resource use.

Purchase second-hand clothing

Instead of purchasing new clothes next time you go shopping, consider buying gently used or second-hand products to reduce waste and resource use.

Purchase clothes made with recycled materials

When purchasing new clothes, look for ones made with organic cotton or recycled and repurposed fabrics to keep waste out of landfills and reduce resource use.