

10 Tips for Greener Living

by Leah Ingram, founder The Lean Green Family Blog (formerly Suddenly Frugal)
<http://suddenlyfrugal.blogspot.com>

It's easy to go green when you make baby-step changes in your daily routine. Here are my 10 easy tips for going green:

1. Get compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL). These energy-efficient bulbs last way longer than regular incandescent bulbs--CFLs give you about 10,000 hours of light whereas incandescent bulbs give only 1,000 hours. When you light bulbs do burn out, drop them off at IKEA, which will recycle them for free.

2. Stock up on reusable bags. Dig out all of those canvas bags you've picked up at conferences. Bring these bags with you whenever you go to the store--whether it be grocery shopping or a day at the mall.

3. Be cool (or warm) in winter and summer. That is, make your house or apartment a couple degrees cooler in the winter, and then run the a/c a little warmer in the summer. Just a few degrees difference can cut your energy consumption and lower your bills, too.

4. Embrace daylight. There is no reason to have lights on during the day if it's bright and sunny out. Try to turn on lights only when it's getting dark or if it's a gloomy day. Also, get in the habit of turning lights off when you leave a room to save energy as well.

5. Start composting. I got my composter for free off of Freecycle, and now I put all of my food scraps (except for meat and dairy) in the compost. Since I started composting, I would estimate that we've reduced our garbage output by at least half.

6. Recycle more than just paper and plastic. Of course everyone should be recycling paper and plastic, but you can find ways to recycle and reuse other items so that they don't end up in landfills. Case in point: old towels, sheets and t-shirts can become rags (saves on paper towels), or you can donate them to a local SPCA, which uses them to line pens or dry off animals after baths.



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7. Shop locally. Spring and summer are great times to take advantage of local farms and farmer's markets for fresh produce, eggs and other locally grown or made items. By shopping locally you can feel confident that you're getting fresher fare, and you don't have to feel guilty that the tomato in your salad traveled 1,000 miles to get to your table.

8. Leave the car at home. Even if walking from home isn't an option, you can park your car in one central place, and then walk to all of the stores where you need to run errands.

9. Dispose of disposables. Get yourself out of the habit of using disposable anything, whether it is paper towels, plastic spoons or paper plates. Even though it might seem logical to use paper plates instead of running the dishwasher, the dishwasher is actually the greener choice.

10. Change how you use (and drink) water. Install aerators on all of your faucets and low-flow showerheads in your bathrooms. These can cut water consumption in half, simply by allowing less water to come out at a time. And ditch the disposable water bottle habit and get yourself a reusable water bottle that you can use to quench your thirst without adding to landfills.

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