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Magazine

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From Environmental Fiend To Friend Of The Earth IN 10 EASY STEPS

go
green

Being environmentally friendly and reducing our impact on the planet is something many of us would like to do, so here Andy Chrysostomou shows you ten easy ways to green your life.



We are constantly being bombarded with messages to reduce CO2 emissions, to save energy, to recycle and to be more environmentally friendly. If it's not in the newspapers, it's on the TV news. Even the government has jumped on to the bandwagon. So, what is all the fuss about? The root of the problem stems from the Earth warming up, which is adversely affecting the climate. Of course that's not the only problem we are facing. The Earth's natural resources that we depend on are running out. Can you imagine a world without petrol, diesel and natural gas? How about a world with dwindling food and water supplies? Wars fought over food and water? Mass migration on an unprecedented level? The rise in global temperatures is happening much faster than anticipated, yet the consequences are not fully understood, but may be upon us sooner than many people realise. A recent report by The United Nations International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) paints a gloomy picture of the effects of higher global temperatures and the speed at which these temperatures are rising. The IPCC says that some major climate changes such as increases in flooding and in heat waves cannot now be stopped because of the temperature increase that has already happened. The report predicts that greenhouse gas emissions will increase by up to 90% by 2030 unless urgent action is taken.

The solution is for us to globally adapt to a way of life that creates less greenhouse gas emissions and uses natural resources at a slower rate. Unfortunately, this is very unlikely to happen because the richer Western countries want to stay rich and the poorer developing countries want to get rich, so industry and commerce that drive the world's economies are in effect dictating governments' policies around the world. We cannot look to our government to take the steps to secure our future's, we have to do it ourselves. There are many things we can do to reduce our own personal impact on the Earth. Individually what we do may seem insignificant, but taken as a whole, we can do a great deal. The answer is for everyone to do what they can, however small it may seem.



Step 1 Turn off the lights

Turn off the lights in rooms you are not in. Sounds so simple, yet people still leave lights on when they leave a room. Hallways are another place where lights are left on constantly. If you switch off five 60w light bulbs for four hours every day for a year, you will save around 270kg of CO2 per year*.

Step 2 Unplug those appliances

Turn off electrical appliances at the mains. When you have finished with your TV or DVD simply turn it off at the mains. Leaving appliances on stand-by uses up more electricity than you realise. You can buy devices such as the Domia Lite system that allows you to switch off the mains power supply to your appliances by remote control, so there's no excuse for not doing it.

Step 5 Bin the bags

Did you know we use 14,000,000,000 carrier bags a year in the UK? Plastic carrier bags are not only a waste of resources and energy, they pose a threat to the environment and to wildlife too, with many hundreds of thousands of birds and animals dying each year as a result. Using just four carrier bags a week for a year creates 8 kg of CO₂*. Make your stand against carrier bags by buying re-usable cloth bags, preferably fair trade ones made with organic cotton.

For more information on how you can make a difference to climate change go to the EU's website http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/campaign/index_en.htm for more tips and advice.

* Figures from www.Mycarbonfootprint.eu

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Step 6 Drive for the environment

Driving a car does produce a great deal of greenhouse gas emissions, but by changing the way you drive you can reduce these emissions. Of course the best solution would be to buy a car that produces the lowest amount of CO₂, but in any car, by driving according to government guidelines you can save over 200kg CO₂ per year*. Simple rules like keeping your speed steady, turning off your engine at stops, avoiding sudden breaking and accelerating, among others can add up to a lot of fuel saved over the years.



Step 3 Change your light bulbs

Replace your high energy incandescent light bulbs with low energy CLF light bulbs. This is a cheap solution to energy waste, and will make a difference to your electricity bill over the year. By changing five light bulbs you normally use for five hours a day, you can save 250kg CO₂ per year*. You can buy low energy bulbs from supermarkets and other high street stores.

Step 9 Turn down the heat

Something as simple as turning down the thermostat by one or two degrees can save you a great deal of money and reduce your energy consumption. A one degree decrease in temperature equates to a saving of 300kg CO₂ over the course of a year*. I have done this and I hardly notice the difference at home. The other thing is to use the central-heating timer wisely to reduce your energy use. If you have rooms that you are not in, turn the radiators off.

Step 4 Recycle

Recycle everything! Many local councils now provide recycling bins for many household waste products, like paper, glass, plastic, metal and organic waste like vegetable and fruit cuttings. By recycling you are being kinder to the environment and saving energy and resources. The organic material gets sent to farms for compost and the other items are recycled in new products, saving on scarce and precious resources and energy. Simply recycling 1kg of aluminium will save around 9kg of CO₂*.

Step 7 Ditch the tumble dryer

Tumble dryers are not only energy wasteful, they are expensive to run. An average family using a tumble dryer will generate around 280kg CO₂ per year*. Use an outdoor clothes-line in the summer or hang your clothes up indoors to dry in winter. This will help to save you money as well as reduce your carbon emissions.

Step 10 Have a swap party

Swap parties are all not only all the rage now, they're great fun too. All it takes is a group of friends, a few bottles of wine and a load of unwanted stuff to swap. You can have a general swap or a specific one. Popular themes for swap parties are clothes, power tools and gadgets. Swap parties not only save the environment, they mean you can get rid of your unwanted stuff and replace it with something more useful, while meeting up with friends, old and new.

Step 8 Insulate to save

Insulating your house does mean spending money, but the money you save in heating your home over the years will more than make up the initial costs. Anything from draught excluders to loft insulation and cavity wall insulation will help to reduce your energy consumption and your bills too.

