

10 Ways To Green Your Office

By Brad Schmett

1. Make sure you're recycling paper, bottles, and cans. Have separate bins in the office for recycling. If your office building does not recycle, try speaking with the office manager. Or, you can create a weekly schedule for sharing the work of taking a recycling bin home each week. (It's sort of a pain, but this is what we do at the Low Impact Living office as our building does not recycle!)
2. Make sure you're using compact fluorescent or LED lights throughout the office. CFs use π the energy and last up to 10 times as long as standard lights. LEDs are even more energy-efficient. If your building is in charge of the lighting, talk to your building manager and make sure that they understand the money they can save from buying CF or LED lights— they may not care about the environment, but they do care about cold, hard cash!
3. Get lighting motion sensors for offices, conference rooms and bathrooms. There's no reason for lights to be on when there's no one in the room.
4. Just like mom said, turn off the lights when you leave. And shut down your printers, faxes and computers. Some people are under the false impression that it's more efficient to leave computers on over night. This is not true— shut off all the electronics when you leave the office.
5. If possible, use laptop computers rather than desktop computers. Energy Star models use up to 90% less energy.
6. Ditch the bottled water habit. Americans throw out over 35 BILLION plastic water bottles every year. Offices are major offenders in this area. Just think how many water bottles your office uses in a year! You can sign up for a water delivery service, or get a big Brita filter, and have everyone use a ceramic or glass cup. This is an easy thing to do and has a big impact!
7. On the same theme, stock your office's kitchen with reusable ceramic plates and mugs rather than paper toss-aways.
8. Use recycled/recyclable office papers and other office products. You can get paper, envelopes, folders, pads, post-it notes— everything comes in a recycled version now. You can find many of these options at the Staples, OfficeMax and Office Depot, and you can also find them online at Green Earth Office Supply or at The Green Office.
9. Get a programmable thermostat. This device will help you keep your building warm/cool when the people there and save power and money when the people are away.
10. Investigate green power options. Many local utilities offer the opportunity for you to pay just a few dollars extra per month to buy "green power" that comes from wind farms and other sustainable sources. Talk to your building manager about this as an option— and you might offer to have your company pay the minimal extra fee.