

Save Money Going Green

By Brad Schmett

There are many, many ways in which embracing a low-impact life can keep the dimes in your piggy bank — so this is by no means an exhaustive list. But it's a good start. Many of these are free, and the ones that aren't cost less than \$100 and pay for themselves very quickly.

1. Save power by making sure you use energy-efficient lighting throughout your home. Lighting is one of the largest uses of power in your home. Use natural lighting where you can, or replace incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent lighting. Fluorescent lights use 1/3 the electricity of normal bulbs and last up to 10 times longer. LED lights are even more efficient than fluorescent lights. And they're not bright and ugly anymore! Buy some of these lights and they will pay for themselves in energy savings in a year.
2. Get low-flow shower and sink attachments to save water. These devices are cheap and can save you thousands of gallons of water each year. For example a low-flow shower head can save you up to 3,000 gallons of water per person per year. Sink attachments cost \$2.50 and shower heads start at \$30.
3. Cancel your newspaper subscription and read your news online. It's the modern way to go, it saves hundreds of trees each year and there's \$100 clams back in your pocket! Then do the same with your magazines.
4. Consider getting rid of your car—or use it less. Get a bike, use public transportation and save thousands of dollars! Read this great feature we did recently on embracing a car-less life. If you get rid of your car you can save thousands of dollars each year on gas, insurance, maintenance, etc. And you will majorly reduce your contribution to global warming.
5. Buy less stuff! And if you do buy something, consider getting it used. Need some furniture? See our recent feature on vintage & used furniture. Need a TV or a computer? Look on Craigslist. Need some clothes? Look on eBay or go to vintage shops & flea markets. Go to garage sales. And try swapping stuff with your friends!
6. Get a programmable thermostat. Many homes waste a great deal of energy and money by heating and cooling when people are not at home. With a programmable thermostat you can set your cooling and heating by day and time to maximize efficiency and money savings. These devices cost \$50 and take 15 minutes to install.
7. Increase the efficiency of your water heater. First, turn the temperature down to at least 120 degrees. Most people run their water heater too hot. Then get an insulation sweater to put around your water heater— it will reduce the amount of energy the heater needs to keep the water hot. (And it costs only \$30) You should also insulate the pipes coming out of your water heater. These are only \$5!
8. Eat less meat, eat more vegetables. Most people know meat is more expensive than veggies, but they may not realize that raising cattle and other meat-producing herds is extremely costly from an environmental perspective. To learn more, read this fascinating report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on the environmental destruction causes by raising livestock.
9. Eat out less— cook at home. Head to your local farmer's market, get some delicious organic treats, and cook 'em up. You can probably even afford a bottle of wine with the money you'll save.
10. Take local vacations. Or take a train instead of a plane. Flying is one of the most carbon-emissions-intensive activities any of us can undertake. Whenever possible, take a train or drive. Live in LA and you've never taken the train up the coast to San Francisco?? Do it— it's gorgeous, relatively inexpensive, and eco-friendly.