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It's Easy Being Green is an indispensable handbook for all those who aspire to do more to protect the environment but want it to be simpler. This friendly, informative guide offers advice and tips on:

- adopting greener buying habits
- finding earth-friendly products
- shopping for green products online
- cultivating a sustainable environment

From energy, transportation and home improvement to the kitchen, bathroom and cleaning, It's Easy Being Green presents a strategy for living a healthier, greener life without the fuss.

By incorporating easy-to-do tips and smart solutions, you can learn ways to save the environment while saving time and money too. Reducing, reusing and recycling have never been easier! Take the difficulty and guesswork out of greener living and start making changes for an eco-friendly lifestyle today.

Crissy Trask is the sole proprietor of GreenMatters, a business started in 1999 to advance environmental education and activism online (www.greenmatters.com).

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A HANDBOOK for EARTH-FRIENDLY LIVING

Crissy Trask

ECO-TIPS

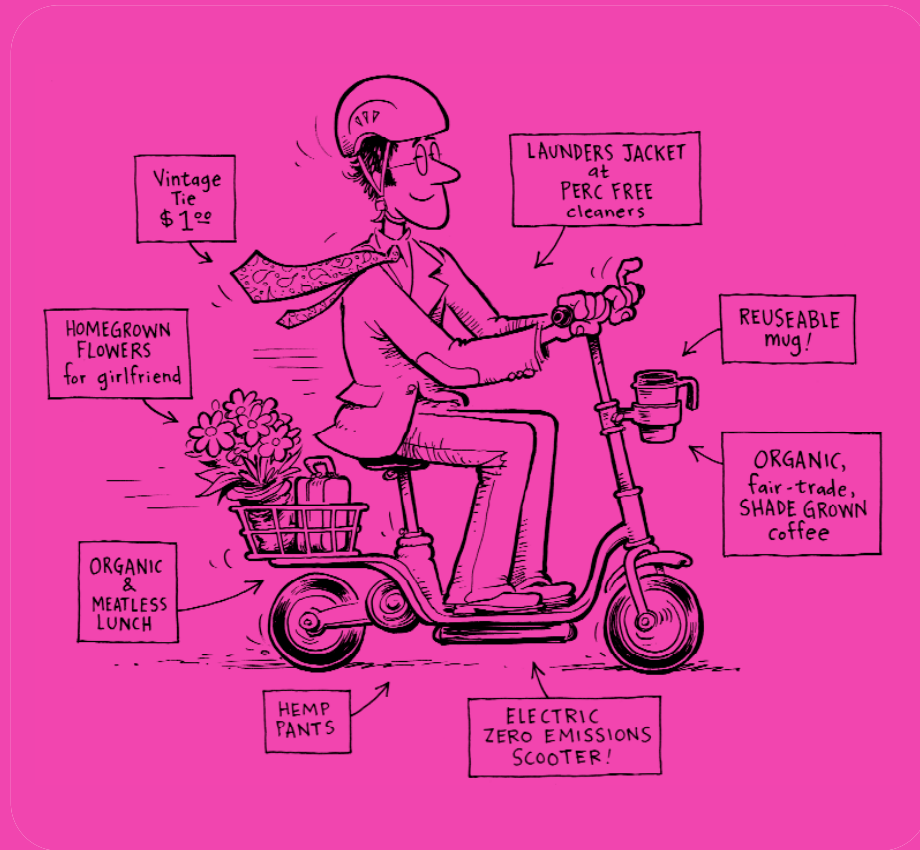
Every day we may make a hundred or more choices, some small and seemingly insignificant, and some large and unquestionably substantial. Small or large, our collective choices and the actions that stem from them have an impact—good, bad or indifferent—on the world around us.

This chapter provides specific and effective tips for reducing your impact on the environment, but more than that, it is a tool of empowerment; by following instructions in this chapter, you can make improvements and make them stick.

At first glance, some tips may not appear so simple, but don't let up-front tasks prevent you from implementing changes that will simplify your life. Making recycling easier at home will require some planning and work. Finding suitable containers for recyclables and placing them, either in an existing space or one you have custom built, will require an investment in time that fits the type of collection system you want to create. Once completed, however, recycling at home will be neat, efficient and effortless.

Your approach to, and follow-through on, these tips should be slow and steady. Positive changes are more likely to take hold and endure if you pursue one change at a time and pursue change deliberately.

“I am only one, but I am still one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.” **Helen Keller**



AT WORK

Ask your employer to consider implementing a policy for compressed work weeks and/or telecommuting. Working four ten-hour days or working from home one or more days a week reduces commuting and traffic, leading to fewer automobile emissions.

Consider buying a laptop. Laptops use 50 percent of the energy used by a typical desktop PC when plugged in and just 1 percent of the energy when running on batteries.

If your copier, printer and fax have a sleep or stand-by mode, make sure it is selected. From the sleep mode, it will automatically wake up when you go to use it.

When using the copier at work, always make two-sided copies. If your printer also has a double-sided feature, use it.

If your office provides disposable cups for beverages, eliminate the need for them by bringing in extra glasses and mugs from home. Post a note in the lunch/break room requesting that your coworkers do the same. Keep the mugs in the lunchroom for anyone to use.

Use suppliers who will take back their recyclable or reusable products at the end of their life for proper disposal, recycling or remanufacturing.

BATHROOM

If you have a nonconserving toilet (a 3.5 gallon flush or greater), retrofit it with a water-saving device. Fill a one-quart plastic bottle with water for each nonconserving toilet in your home, and submerge one bottle in each toilet tank. You will save one quart of water per flush and thousands of gallons a year.

Fix all leaks. To check for leaks, turn off all water in the house. Next, read your water meter, wait one hour (make sure no water is turned on during this period), and read the meter again. If the meter does not read exactly the same, there is a leak.

Take short showers. With water flowing up to five gallons per minute from a nonconserving showerhead, showers consume about one-fifth of water used indoors.

Turn off the water while brushing your teeth. Fill a cup with water and use it instead of running water. This applies to shaving as well. Partially fill the sink bowl to rinse your razor instead of running the water.

Buy a shower curtain that will far outlast cheap plastic ones; a shower curtain made of hemp will naturally resist mildew and is machine washable.

Use a strainer on all drains to catch hair and prevent drain clogs. If you do get a clog, use a metal snake to work the clog loose, not toxic drain cleaners.

BUILDING AND HOME IMPROVEMENT

Carefully dismantle rooms and buildings during a renovation to salvage reusable materials and fixtures. To donate or sell what you salvage, check your phone book under “Building Materials—Used” or “Salvage.”

If you are building or renovating a home, check out salvage yards and antiques stores for used building materials and fixtures. They can be a great source of inexpensive and vintage items.

If you live in a cold climate, paint your house a dark color. Dark colors reflect as little as 3 percent of sunlight, thus absorbing more heat. If you live in a warm climate, paint your house a light color that will reflect up to 90 percent of sunlight and keep your house cooler.

Before discarding empty latex paint cans, leave the top off and allow the remaining paint to dry completely. Latex paint is not hazardous once it is solidified.

Use wool floor coverings instead of synthetic alternatives; they are more durable and easier to clean.

ENERGY

Clean refrigerator gaskets and vacuum the condenser coils twice a year. Your refrigerator will operate more efficiently and use less electricity.

Wrap your water heater in an insulating jacket if it is located in an unheated space such as a basement or garage.

Use your microwave. Cooking and reheating with a microwave is faster and more efficient than using the stovetop or oven, thus reducing up to 70 percent of energy use.

Use a toaster oven for small jobs. It will use a third to half as much energy as a full-size oven.

Arrange furniture to take advantage of natural light from windows. Place desks and reading chairs next to windows to cut down on the need and use of supplemental, artificial light during the day.

Switch to fluorescent bulbs in areas where extended lighting is required. Though the initial price is higher than for incandescent bulbs, fluorescent lights produce four times as much light per watt, last up to ten times as long and therefore cost one-third as much to operate.