

# **Ways to Go Green**

**The Silver Bullets That Will Save Our Planet**

Going green and saving energy is about more than simply reducing the amount you spend monthly on your electricity bill; it's about making an investment into the future of this planet in ways that pay back huge dividends for the long term. That's right, "going green" is the absolute easiest way to give yourself an instant raise in income. Before we show you just how to increase your daily income by saving on your energy costs, let's first take a step into what going green means and the overall effects your efforts will have in both the short and long term.

## **Why is Going Green So Important?**

For those who love to hug and wave at trees, rescue animals displaced by construction, and ride their bikes for reasons other than necessity and exercise, the question of "Why is going green so important?" seems foolish. Unlike most, this small but growing group understands that the Earth we inhabit is more than the simple rocks, grass, and water we see; the Earth is a living, breathing beauty that sustains all life-forms. From the mysteries of the ocean's depths to the ice-covered mountaintops, the Earth breathes life into all creatures. So aside from that warm, fuzzy feeling you get by doing good deeds, there are some clear, scientific reasons that our non-green lifestyles have produced.

**1. Increased Population, Steady Earth Size.** History shows that in the 1800s there were roughly 1 billion people inhabiting the Earth, and only 2 billion in 1922. This doubling population pales in comparison to the tripled population experienced today with the estimated 6.5 billion people living worldwide today. The population “boom” which can be contributed to better medical care resulting in longer overall life spans; families (such as farmers) who produced more children to support their livelihood, and general increases in fertility levels has done more than drain already reduced resources. Sadly, the problem will only get worst as the population in 50 years is expected to exceed 9 billion people.

**2. Waste not, want not.** As increases in population occurred, so did increases in spending on items to sustain households. Initially, these items were necessities - things like light bulbs, toiletries, and other common items. However over time, homes became surplus storage spaces for items that were used and either packed into onsite storage locations (drawers, garages, attics, etc) or discarded as trash to landfills, never to be used again. In the United States, trash collectors make rounds to pick up the excess of items purchased and discarded on a regular (usually weekly) basis. As landfills reach their maximum capacities, new landfills are constructed, and monitoring of the disposed items is impossible, so harmful items (such as batteries and electronics)

and those which do not break down easily are also included in the rubble. Over time these products become pollutants in the water supply and contaminate crop fields, both of which cause immediate health risks to humans and animals.

3.**Climate Changes.** It's not an illusion that it seemed a whole lot cooler when we were growing up. Long before kids became glued to video games that kept them from exercising regularly, the sheer heat of summer was enough to keep even the toughest kids inside. Aside from cutting down the trees that provide shade and keep things cool with willowy breezes, carbon emissions, forest burnings, and air pollution have raised the surface temperature of the earth by more than one degree since 1900.

4.**Non-Renewable Resources.** According to the Energy Information Administration, the burning of fossil fuels produce 86 percent of the energy consumed worldwide. Resources such as coal, petroleum, and methane, which take million of years to form are now used at alarming rates without recourse. In addition to the depletion of these non-renewable resources, when burned they also cause twice as much carbon dioxide than the Earth can naturally process.

5.**Animal Planet.** The animals that inhabit the Earth are perhaps the first benefactors of humans going green. Their dependence

on the planet and the purity of its natural resources has a direct effect of their ability to survive. Unlike humans, who are able to use material means to adapt (like air conditioners and heaters), animals are often at the mercy of the elements. Just as ice caps melt away in Arctic environments causing its inhabitants to quickly adjust, the extreme heats felt in normally mild areas also force the animals to adjust. Limited water and food supplies, natural migrations, and human takeovers of land are but a few dangers animals face.

Being conscious of the effect that each individual has on the collective effect of the Earth is only the first part of green thinking. By taking this knowledge one step further, we as individuals can contribute to a solution that not only saves the plants, the animals, the Earth, but it also saves in ways that are tangible. These include major improvements in air quality, longevity in the resources that are consumed, and realized increases in income for every person who participates.

## What are the Actual Benefits of Going Green?

Aside from that warm and fuzzy feeling we mentioned earlier, there are some surefire benefits to going green. Taken individually, they may not produce the rewards you are expecting, however, collective efforts are sure to have you singing the praises of living a green lifestyle.

1. **Lighting Alternatives.** Replacing all of the incandescent bulbs in your home from standard to compact fluorescent light bulbs has been proven to save you upwards of \$55 each year on utility costs.

2. **Shade trees decrease cooling bills.** Smart landscaping can not only help clean the air, but it will also reduce the amount of heat that enters your home. By planting shade-producing trees strategically in proximity to your home, you can reduce the temperature indoors by up to 9 degrees Fahrenheit. The decrease in the amount you spend cooling your home can easily exceed \$250 per year.

3. **Car maintenance saves big.** Keep your car maintained with regular oil changes, maintaining proper tire inflation, and consistent tune ups can save you upwards of \$700 each year. Not only will it run more efficiently, it will also reduce the amount of carbon it emits into the air.

**4. Public transportation.** Public transportation is a great way to lessen your individual effect on the environment. And, although you're not eliminating the use of gas per se, you are contributing to the big picture in ways that pay off. For example, you save on the wear and tear on your vehicle, reduce emissions, reduce stress as you get work done, relax, listen to music or read during your commute, and get exercise as you walk to and from your drop-off locations. Public transportation serves as a pocket-pleasing, healthy way to go green.

**5. Tax breaks.** If you are in the US, then you might want to consider the fact that the government pays you to conserve energy through realized tax credits. That's right, by owning a fuel-efficient vehicle and using energy efficient appliances you can reap the rewards during tax time. According to the Department of Energy website (<http://www.energy.gov>), energy efficient windows, ENERGY STAR® qualified roofs, and approved insulation can net you up to \$500; compliant AC units, air source and geothermal heat pumps, energy compliant and electric heat pump water heaters can pocket you \$300 in credits, and a gas, oil, or propane furnace or hot water boiler will produce a \$150 tax credit.

**6. Recycling Paper.** According to the the environmentally aware Go Green Initiative, every ton of paper that is recycled saves 7,000

gallons of water, 380 gallons of oil, and enough electricity to power the average house for 6 months. Businesses can do their part by simply setting up paper recycling bins in central locations. Communities can do the same.

7.**Recycling Cans.** One aluminum can that is recycled can power a television for 6 hours according to the Go Green Initiative group. You can easily imagine the positive effects of putting all of your soda, beer, and canned food waste into the recycle bin.

8.**Recycling Bottles.** Glass bottles are another way to save energy. “By recycling just one glass bottle, you save enough electricity to power a 100-watt bulb for four hours”, states the Go Green Initiative group.

9.**Rethink purchases.** Most people are only thrifty when they have to be, and during all other times splurges are the norm. Ask yourself, “How many shirts do I have?” and of those, “How many do I wear?”. If the answers aren’t equal, then you may want to rethink your next shirt purchase. You may insert any material item in for the word shirt (pants, shoes, cars, watches, gadgets, gizmos, etc). By carefully weighing your needs against your inability to look past years of targeted marketing research done by stores to attract you to buy, you can single-handedly reduce the amount of waste that’s being consumed. A better way to shop is to give

away items to those who need them, and then reward yourself with new items that are of a smaller quantity. For example, give away 5 old shirts to Goodwill, and then purchase yourself 1 shirt that's a must have. Over time, you will also see the reduction of clutter caused by the accumulation of the unnecessary stuff you once stored.

10. **Energy Efficient Appliances.** Most homes in the US have already updated their appliances to energy efficient models, and if your major home appliance were purchased prior to the mid-nineties, you may want to make sure they carry the Energy Star label which certifies that it was made to be energy efficient. Everyday appliances (like your stove, refrigerator, washer and dryer) consume 60-70% of a home's utility costs monthly. By using energy efficient you can realize savings for the long-term. Energy efficient refrigerators can save \$100 a year (\$115 if it's freezer on top and not a side-by-side model); Energy Star washers can contribute to \$110 in yearly savings for an average-sized family; newer model dishwashers not only save you \$25 on your yearly utilities, but they also don't require a pre-wash before loading like older models which contributes to your water conservation efforts.

11. **Walk Often.** Short trips are a great way to spend more time with the family, get exercise, meet new people (who are also go-

ing green), save on gas costs, reduce emissions and eliminate your part in the pollution caused by vehicles. Consider walking your kids to school, shopping on foot, and taking family trips in your local area. In addition, by walking with a wheeled-cart to the grocer instead of driving, you won't overspend on unnecessary items you know you'll have to get home.

12. **Unplug and Powerdown.** Non-essential appliances such as computers, fax machines, and night lights should be unplugged or set to phantom mode when not in use. Depending on the number of running electronics, this could add noticeable savings yearly.

13. **Learn to Cool Down.** According to the WorldWatch Institute, up to 85% of the costs associated with running washing machines, dishwashers and showers goes into heating the water you use. So be sure to use cold (or cooler) water instead of hot to conserve energy.

14. **Get Your Company Involved.** No company or boss wants to look like the bad guy when it comes to saving the planet. So, consider getting both involved in your efforts to go green. Set up a commuting board so that people in close neighborhoods can ride-share; ask to work from home one-two days per week (and get more work done so that you can increase the number of days you work from home to three or four). Alternatively, discussing the

possibility of working longer hours each day to eliminate the need to work on low-stress work days altogether. Recycle. Ask for employee incentives for green efforts, and look for ways your company can get involved in overall healthier lifestyles that incorporate good green habits.

15. **Go old-school whenever possible.** A far cry from today's instant reward lifestyles, old-school techniques used before the modern technology takeover were inherently green. Using a clothesline instead of a clothes dryer (saves energy), skip the bottled waters (saves on resources), borrow instead of buying things like rarely used power tools, books (think libraries), and plant gardens to grow natural foods on your own terms.

In the end, no one effort is going to make the impact that is needed to clean the mess we have been making for over 40 years. However, by combining multiple energy saving tactics together your works will contribute to a healthier planet that has the resources needed to sustain life; save real money; and set an excellent example for generations to come.

