

# 13 easy ways to go green

It's Earth Day weekend. How you can help? Here are a dozen-plus ways to start.

BY ASHLEY BELL

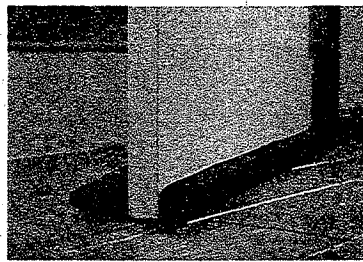
**M**AKING JUST A FEW TWEAKS to your habits can help the planet, your wallet and even your health, say Kim McKay and Jenny Bonnin in their new book, *True Green: 100 Everyday Ways You Can Contribute to a Healthier Planet* (NATIONAL

GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, \$19.95). "Supporting the environment doesn't have to mean chaining yourself to a tree," McKay says. "It's very simple — it's not scary." Start off your week by trying some of these tips from *True Green* — at home, at work and when out running errands.

## AT HOME

► **Unplug the charger for your cellphone.** "It's amazing," McKay says, "but the charger will continue to draw electricity, even when it's not charging." Likewise, do not trust the standby or "sleep" mode on other electronics. Turn off your appliances right at their power source. The result: You'll save \$70 off your annual electrical bill, and the planet will get 190 fewer pounds of greenhouse gases.

**A draft stopper saves on heating.**



► **Use an old-fashioned draft stopper.** By blocking the crack between an exterior door and the floor, you won't need to amp up the heat or AC.

► **Run the dishwasher only when it's full.** That one simple move conserves 10 to 20 gallons of water a day. Don't pre-rinse (a running faucet wastes 2.5-plus gallons a minute) and don't use the dishwasher's dry cycle. Open the door to let dishes air-dry.

► **Wash clothes on the cold cycle.** Switching from the hot water cycle can save \$60 on your annual heating bill, and the planet is spared 6.5 pounds in emissions per load. Again, wash only full loads, and go easy with the soap.

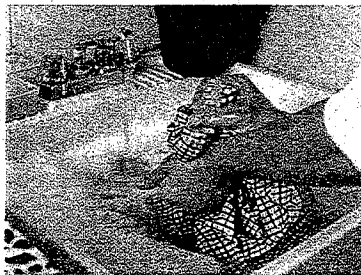
## RUNNING ERRANDS

► **Plot a week's worth of errands geographically to save fuel.** Drive at a moderate pace to save on fuel consumption. Keep your car well maintained and tires inflated properly.

► **Tote your own shopping bags.** Some retailers reward customers for doing so (Whole Foods credits you 5 cents per bag used). And last month, Ikea, to discourage plastic bag use, started charging shoppers (5 cents per bag), a common practice in other countries. Only 0.6% of the 380 billion plastic bags discarded in the United States each year are recycled; the rest end up in landfills and in the wild.

► **Try to spot-clean or hand-wash your clothes before resorting to dry cleaning.** Many cleaners employ chemicals that harm the environment. Find one that uses "clean, green" processes and reuses hangers and bags.

**Some dry-clean-only fabrics can be washed.**



► **Check labels to see how far your food has traveled.** When grocers source cheap foods from foreign nations and distant states, it means greater carbon emissions and less fresh, ripe food.

## DURING THE WORKDAY



► **Bring your own coffee mug to the barista.**

That means 30 times less solid waste and 60 times less air pollution. Most java joints will happily fill your mug, and because it saves them money, you're likely to get a slightly larger pour.

► **Turn off your computer nightly.** It's the office's main drain, using more juice than all other equipment combined. Savings: about 75% fewer kilowatts.

► **Repurpose paper.** Because the typical U.S. worker uses 10,000 sheets each year — roughly one tree's worth — keep a scrap paper tray on your desk, place a recycling bin in a high-traffic area, print on both sides, and urge your office to buy recycled paper. Less than 9% of the 8 million tons used every year is recycled, but going secondhand will use up to 90% less water and half the energy.

► **Reuse ink cartridges up to four times,** unless the warranty says otherwise. Using a reputable company (Staples, Dell, etc.) to refill your cartridges will save you up to 90% on the cost of a new cartridge.

**Use your own mug at the office, too.**

# How to Live a Greener Life

**RESOURCES:** A few ways to help reduce the billions of metric tons of greenhouse-gas emissions created yearly by the U.S.

BY JESSICA RAMIREZ

## At Home

**Calculate your impact:** If knowledge is power, then take a minute to assess the damage. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's online calculator estimates greenhouse-gas emissions that result from your household energy use and waste disposal. Get your number at [epa.gov/climate](http://epa.gov/climate).

**Trade up:** Not ready to replace the roof with solar panels? Then start small. The average U.S. home has two TVs, a VCR, a DVD player and three telephones. If everyone replaced these with Energy Star models, which meet strict energy-efficiency guidelines, it would be equivalent to taking more than 3 million cars off the road. Learn more about Energy Star at [energystar.gov](http://energystar.gov).

### Sweat the small stuff:

A faucet that leaks 60 drops per minute can add up to 192 gallons per month. You can find out how to leak-proof your home and even create a water budget at [h2ouse.org](http://h2ouse.org).

**Ramp up recycling:** Increasing the recycling rate in the United States from 30 percent to 60 percent would save the equivalent of 315 million barrels of oil each year. Visit [earth911.org](http://earth911.org) for a rundown on how to properly recycle everything from aluminum to motor oil.

### Do some green cleaning:

Natural cleaners like borax and lemon juice are ecofriendly alternatives to regular chemical-based products. Check out [eartheasy.com](http://eartheasy.com) for basic household-cleaner recipes.

**Power properly:** Using ener-



**RESTORING:** Planting a mangrove tree in West Palm Beach, Fla.

gy generated from renewable sources like wind helps reduce the burning of fossil fuels such as coal. The Green Power Network at [eere.energy.gov/greenpower](http://eere.energy.gov/greenpower) will list what's available in your area.

## On the Road

### Drive in the green lane:

Compare fuel-efficiency rates and learn about green tax credits at [fuelconomy.gov](http://fuelconomy.gov). Not looking to buy? The site also offers tips to help make your vehicle less of a gas guzzler. Properly inflated tires alone could save Americans more than 4 million gallons of gas each day.

**Go public:** You can reduce

your carbon dioxide emissions by about 1,590 pounds per year if you leave the car home two days a week and take public transportation instead. Find out about public-transportation options in your state at [publictransportation.org](http://publictransportation.org).

**Neutralize it:** With some basic vehicle information, sites like [terrapass.com](http://terrapass.com) and [gocarbonzero.com](http://gocarbonzero.com) will give you an estimate of the carbon dioxide your car produces. You can offset the damage by donating money to suggested ecofriendly projects.

## At Work

**Get rid of the excess:** Companies can stop receiving mail

meant for former employees by visiting [ecologicalmail.org](http://ecologicalmail.org). For every former employee entered into the site's database, a company will avoid 100 pounds of waste in undeliverable mail. That's equivalent to one tree.

**Pool your people:** Simple carpooling or ride-sharing can have a great impact when you consider that 78 percent of cars on the road carry only one person. Create a company carpool at [erideshare.com](http://erideshare.com).

**E-cycle:** The EPA estimates that more than 2 million tons of electronic hardware ends up in landfills each year. Your company can recycle properly or donate old computers with the help of [eiae.org](http://eiae.org) and get information on ecofriendly replacements at [epeat.net](http://epeat.net).

## In Your Community

**Be cool:** Cities across the country are making a pact to meet or beat Kyoto Protocol targets through community efforts. Visit [coolcities.us](http://coolcities.us) to see how you can get your city involved.

**Pay it forward:** Want to teach your community more about climate change? Find lectures in your area or apply to become a presenter at the [climateproject.org](http://climateproject.org).

**Keep it local:** Most food travels 1,200 miles or more from the pasture to your plate. Buying locally saves fuel and helps farmers in your community. Web sites like [localharvest.org](http://localharvest.org) and [usda.gov](http://usda.gov) provide lists of local farmers markets.

### Text the next generation:

E-mail your kids and their friends a link to [mtv.com/thinkmtv](http://mtv.com/thinkmtv) and have them sign up for daily green tips via text message. Each text suggests a small way to make a big difference. ■

**(((N)))** What's your global-warming IQ? Test yourself at [xtra.Newsweek.com](http://xtra.Newsweek.com)