We are currently facing the most critical environmental issues in human history. Our climate, planet, lives, and future as a civilization are all at risk. While the magnitude of that thought can be extremely overwhelming, don’t allow yourself to feel helpless, not knowing where to begin. Making small steps and adjustments in your daily routine will give you a sense of success and a yearning to attempt more.

Here are 5 simple ways you can help the environment and spark others to become more environmentally aware.

1. Replace disposable items with reusable

Anything you use and throw away can potentially spend *centuries* in a landfill. See below for simple adjustments you can make to decrease the amount of disposable items in your daily life.

* Carry your own reusable cup or water bottle
* Use airtight, reusable food containers instead of sandwich bags and plastic wrap
* Pack a waste-free lunch: carry your utensils, cloth napkin, and containers in a reusable lunch bag
* Bring your own bags to the grocery store
* Consider buying bulk containers of your preferred beverages and refilling a reusable bottle, instead of buying individually packaged drinks
* Use rechargeable batteries

2. Pass on paper

We are living in the Digital Era, but think about all the paper products you use in your daily life. These actions still align with reusing and repurposing, though may take a little more time for transition.

* Join a library instead of buying books or buy a Kindle
* Print as little as possible; and if you must, print on both sides
* Wrap gifts in fabric and tie with ribbon; both are reusable and prettier than paper and sticky-tape
* Stop using paper towels and incorporate washable cloths
* Look at labels to make sure you only use [FSC-certified wood](https://us.fsc.org/en-us/certification) and paper products
* Cut out products made by [palm oil companies](https://inhabitat.com/tag/palm-oil/) that contribute to deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia

3. Conserve water & electricity

The tips you see below will seem like no-brainers; however, it may take to become more aware of your unconscious habits.

* Turn the sink water off when brushing your teeth
* Water the lawn in the morning or evening; cooler air causes less evaporation
* Switch off anything that uses electricity when not in use (lights, televisions, computers, printers, etc.)
* Unplug devices when possible; even when an appliance is turned off, it may still use power
* Remove chemicals inside of the house; research companies that use plant-derived ingredients for their household cleaning products
* Remove chemicals outside of the house; use eco-friendly pesticides and herbicides that won’t contaminate groundwater
* Consider signing up for a renewable energy producer that uses 100% renewable energy to power homes

4. Support local & environmentally friendly

Here are a few reasons to start buying local:

* Reduces plastic and paper waste
* Boosts cost-efficiency
* Enables bulk purchasing
* Helps support your neighbors
* Retains farmland within the community
* Builds up the local economy
* Uses fewer chemicals for both for growing and transporting

5. Recycle (& then recycle properly)

Implementing recycling habits into your daily life is one of the most effective ways to help lessen landfill waste, conserve natural resources, save habitats, reduce pollution, cut down on energy consumption, and slow down global warming.

* Confirm you are using the proper separation containers for your household per the local recycling services
* Remember to make sure your trash bags are recycled or biodegradable, and always cut up the plastic rings from packs of beer or soda to prevent wildlife from getting caught
* Educate yourself about what can and cannot be recycled, as not all plastic and cardboard is acceptable (like pizza boxes for example, due to the grease)
* Learn how to identify and dispose of hazardous waste properly

Taking the time to simply read this article for ways to solve environmental problems is a step forward to becoming more aware of the needs of your environment. You are now taking action, and every change–big or small–will create an impact.

If you’re already taking action on the suggestions above, see below for additional tips and ideas:

* Add these simple lists to your digital checklist and pick one at a time to tackle. After a week or so, check it off the list and move on to the next. Remember to pat yourself on the back! You just created a change in your lifestyle!
* Find a comfortable compromise for your life. Purchase a pack of affordable, reusable rags and give them a specific purpose. For example, perhaps you always clean your countertops with paper towels; try wiping them down with cloth towels instead.
* Remember to highlight your successes and share them with others! #savetheplanet
* Calculate your environmental footprint to see how much impact just one person has on the world’s resources and adjust accordingly.
* Consider an environmentally-focused career like [one of the top four environmental jobs of the future.](https://unity.edu/sustainability/environmental-jobs-of-the-future/)