

Sustainable Living Made Easier

(A Customizable Worksheet)

Congratulations! You're taking the first steps to making your lifestyle one that our planet can sustain.

Remember, the goal here isn't perfection, but do-able steps that begin reducing the impact you have on the planet. The idea is to make the process manageable and actionable, not to make you an eco-martyr.

Sustainability Basics: Where's My Impact?

If you haven't already, go enter your information in an [ecological footprint calculator](#). Knowing where your environmental impact comes will help you make more informed choices.

Below are the categories where most of us have the greatest impact, in descending order. Start by checking off the actions you've already taken. Then pick one or two items to start that you find doable, as high on the list as you can. When you've finished one, check it off and choose another. Little by little you'll whittle down your environmental footprint.

Don't forget to congratulate yourself on your progress. Every step we take to make our lives more sustainable is a step in the right direction!

Sustainable Action Steps

Energy Use

- Flying:** Limit trips by air when possible, choosing rail or other mass transit when you can. A fuel-efficient car carrying several people may have a smaller impact than if you all fly.
- Driving:** Limit car trips, choosing mass transit, biking, or walking when possible. When you replace your car, [get one that's more energy efficient](#) (hybrid, plugin hybrid, or all-electric).

In the home:

Heating & cooling

- Dress appropriately for the seasons and adjust your thermostat to keep your home cooler in winter and warmer in summer.
- Get an [energy audit](#)
- Add insulation
- Upgrade HVAC to more efficient equipment when it's time to replace. Look into air-source heat pumps or geothermal (ground-source heat pumps) in place of conventional air conditioners.

Electricity Use:

- Turn off & unplug things not in use (add smart strips for TV, printer, etc. to cut “vampire power,” a big chunk of most homes’ energy use)
- Consider renewable energy ([solar panels](#), community solar, power company program)

Food

- Limit consumption of animal products. Add to your repertoire of meatless meals and when you do use animal products, use smaller amounts rather than making them the star of the meal.

List the items you currently buy and replacements to consider:

Animal Product

Alternative

- Buy unpackaged food as much as possible (use jars and reusable produce bags to shop)

List the packaged items you currently buy and replacements to consider:

Packaged Product

Alternative

- Choose organic options when possible

Cut waste

- [Avoid single use](#)
 - Replace paper products with cloth napkins and rags
 - Use rechargeable batteries instead of alkaline
 - Avoid buying bottled beverages (make your own instead)
 - Skip takeout containers & cups by bringing your own
 - Replace products in plastic bottles with bar soap/shampoo bar/refillable hand soap & other zero waste swaps
 - Choose laundry powder instead of liquid

- Buy less overall
 - Ask yourself if you really need something before buying
 - Buy used when possible
- Compost (or subscribe to compost service)

Water

- Install water-saving faucet aerators & showerheads (look for [EPA WaterSense](#) label)
- Choose water-saving appliances
- Install dual-flush toilets or adapt a standard toilet with [one of these conversion kits](#)
- Turn off water when brushing teeth or doing dishes

Yard (See [Ecological Landscaping Basics](#))

- Limit grass & mowing
- Cut out use of fertilizer and pesticides
- Choose low-water plantings and use [waterwise garden strategies](#) when you do need to water
- Grow some of your own food & herbs

Reduce Toxic Exposure

- [Filter water](#)
- Use [plant-based personal care](#) (soap/shampoo, hair products, makeup, etc.)
- Use [plant-based cleaners](#) (laundry detergent, kitchen, bath cleaners, etc.)
- Have a no-shoes policy in your home
- Choose [Green Guard](#) furnishings
- Replace plasticware

SPEAK UP!

While making changes to limit your own impact is important, getting the companies we buy from to change business-as-usual is critical if the large-scale shifts our society needs are going to happen. Here's what to do:

- ❑ **Vote with your dollars.** Buy from companies emphasizing sustainability in their operations.
- ❑ **Write to the companies you buy from** and let them know you want them to do better, for instance moving away from plastic packaging. Tag them on social media.
- ❑ **Write to elected officials** asking them to mandate more sustainable practices, such as stricter fuel standards, chemical regulations, and so on.
- ❑ **Participate in protests.** Mass mobilizations of people protesting for climate action catch the attention of world leaders. The more bodies in a march, the better.
- ❑ **Sign petitions and support environmental organizations** lobbying for climate-friendly regulations and policies. [Here's a list of some to consider.](#)

I hope this worksheet helps you take some steps to cutting your environmental footprint. If you have suggestions for how it might be improved, PLEASE email them to me at Susannah@healthygreensavvy.com. Even if you don't have suggestions, email or leave a comment on [the post where you found this](#) explaining what you've done and what you'll do next. I would *love* to hear.

And please share on social media and with your friends! The more of us working to reduce our environmental impact the better.

Thanks so much!
Susannah