



# How Green are you?

## Green Homes



The home is a place where people can make positive changes for the environment in a number of key areas.

### Heating, Lighting and Electrical Goods

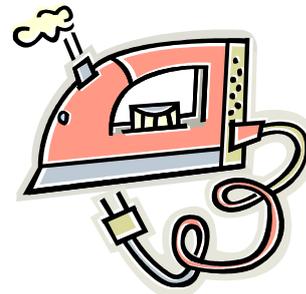
Heating and lighting contribute to the comfort of homes, but wasting energy damages the environment and costs money. About 25% of the carbon dioxide produced in the UK comes from domestic heating and lighting. Carbon dioxide emissions are a major factor leading to global warming which is causing climate change.

The effect of climate change is already visible and will get worse. They include rising sea-levels, an increase in storms and flooding in some places and drought in others and changes in the distribution of some disease-bearing organisms. Potentially the most damaging impact, however, is the disruption to ecosystems

resulting from shifts in the habitable ranges of key species.

People in Britain and Ireland contribute as much as 50 times more climate change than those in the poorest countries, but it is the poor who will feel its effects soonest and hardest. It is estimated that, by 2050, rising sea levels, severe weather and crop failures could create 150 million refugees.

By undertaking energy saving and efficiency measures, the average household's energy bill of £500 per year (and increasing due to Peak Oil) could be reduced by up to £200 per year and also reduce carbon emissions too.



Around 35% of heat energy is lost through walls that are not insulated, but by installing cavity wall insulation up to 60% of this heat can be saved. Also up to 20% of heat can be lost by draughts around windows, doors and floors.

**Action points to save energy and prevent pollution:**

- Installing at least 20cm (8 inches) depth of loft insulation can save around 20% of heating costs
- Fitting a jacket around a water cylinder may cost around £10, but save up to £20 a year
- Installation in an average house (3 bed semi-detached) costs around £450 and costs can be recovered in savings made over 4 years
- Fitting draught-excluders can save heat and money, but ensure that adequate ventilation is maintained, particularly in rooms with gas or solid fuel fires
- Houses with boilers older than 15 years are likely to benefit by changing to a more fuel-efficient model. Modern gas-condensing boilers are particularly efficient as they recycle some of the energy from exhaust emissions
- Fitting and using timer and thermostatic controls can significantly reduce energy consumption without loss of comfort
- Low-energy light bulbs are now the only ones that may be legally sold for household use in the UK. They are getting cheaper, brighter and faster to 'warm up' all the time and can reduce energy consumption by up to 80%. The bulbs also last up to 10 times longer than the now defunct incandescent type, saving both money and the need to change bulbs frequently. Diode-based bulbs are also increasing in availability, and

make a similar leap in energy consumption and durability over the florescent kind, as well as being less polluting.

- Taking a daily shower instead of a bath can save water and up to £10 per year on your fuel bill
- Leaving electrical equipment like TV and DVD players on standby uses almost as much energy as when you are watching. Turning appliances off at the on/off button saves this waste. Similarly turning off anything with a transformer at the socket saves money and the environment.



Some utility companies have subsidised energy saving schemes and products – check your local supply company for current offers.

Additional grants are sometimes available to install energy saving measures for those in receipt of certain benefits. The Warm Front Scheme provides loft insulation and draft proofing for elderly people in receipt of benefits, please ask you local authority for details. Also the Green New Deal is aiming to retrofit all of our housing stock to improve energy efficiency.

Energy Action Grants Agency for information on Home Energy contact Eaga, Partnership House, Regent Farm Road, Regent Centre, Gosforth,

Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE3 3AF  
0191 247 3800 (Switchboard)  
[enquiry@eaga.com](mailto:enquiry@eaga.com)

Efficiency Scheme (Warm Front) grants  
(managed by EAGA)

Warm Front at Directgov:  
0800 316 2805 Textphone 0800 072  
0156  
[www.tinyurl.com/2f8l283](http://www.tinyurl.com/2f8l283)

The Energy Savings Trust (or contact  
your local Energy Advice Centre)  
Free advice for householders - call 0800  
512 012  
21 Dartmouth Street, London SW1H 9BP  
020 7222 0101  
[info@energysavingtrust.org.uk](mailto:info@energysavingtrust.org.uk)  
[www.energysavingtrust.org.uk](http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk)

### Renewable or “Green” Electricity

You can choose to use only renewable of “green” electricity for your household needs. Renewable energy doesn’t involve burning resources that produce “greenhouse gases”, which contribute to climate change. Instead it comes from the harnessing the energy in the wind, waves, the sun, rivers, tides and environmental heat.

As most of us are connected to the National Grid we can’t choose where the electricity that enters our home comes from. However, when you buy green electricity, you commit your supplier to purchasing at least the amount of energy that you use from a renewable source (or in some cases to invest their profits into renewable projects). Therefore the more people who sign up, the more

electricity the supplier will have to purchase from a green generator.

Friends of the Earth produce a large number of useful briefings and guides on energy conservation, waste reduction and decarbonising your home.  
[www.foe.co.uk/index.html](http://www.foe.co.uk/index.html)

Christian Ecology Link funds a climate campaign called Operation Noah and can recommend “green electricity” energy suppliers.  
[www.operationnoah.org/](http://www.operationnoah.org/)  
[www.christian-ecology.org.uk/](http://www.christian-ecology.org.uk/)



### High-tech equipment

High-tech equipment such as computers and mobile phones are transforming the way that people conduct their lives, but the rapid changes in technology means that there is a growing high-tech waste mountain.

A number of charities or organisations can take unwanted computer equipment for reuse or recycling. Your local authority might have details of local schemes. Additionally, unwanted mobile phones and toner cartridges can be given to a variety of charities that forward them to recycling schemes and raise money for their work. Where printing is

required, use less ink by shrinking your font and coloring it 80% or 60% grey.

Unwanted mobile handsets and old inkjet cartridges (not Epson) can be donated to charities such as Scope, Oxfam, Wildlife Trusts etc  
[www.recyclingappeal.com/](http://www.recyclingappeal.com/)



## Water

Water is a scarce resource and needs to be conserved. Whilst some people on the planet have little access to clean water, in western countries the amount of water we use is increasing. The richer we are the more we consume.

Average use per person per day is approaching 130 litres of water. Taking a bath uses 80 litres of water, but taking a shower uses 5 litres per min. Flushing the toilet uses 9.5 litres. Using a washing machine uses 80 litres and using a dishwasher 35 litres.

### **Action Points to save water**

- Turn off taps fully and fix leaking taps - one drip at one drop per second will waste 1200l per year
- Have a shower rather than a bath
- Use a plug in wash basins and sinks rather than washing with a running tap

- Fit a water hippo in your toilet cistern to save 1 litre per flush (or a brick will do)
- Turn off the tap whilst cleaning your teeth, or use a mug of water instead
- Install a water butt, linking it to a down pipe to collect water from a roof
- If you use a washing machine or a dishwasher reduce the frequency of running it by always having a full load.
- If you can, install a parallel grey-water system so that you use filtered rainwater to shower and flush the loo instead of drinkable water.

For more information about water saving, contact your local water supply company.

### **Action points to reduce water pollution**

- Minimise your phosphate based detergents and bleach. Use eco-friendly cleaning products.
- Minimise your use of toxic substances such as pesticides and creosote, which might get washed into the drainage system or water system
- Safely dispose of waste oils, paints, solvents and batteries at a collection point rather than pouring them down a drain (which is, in any case, illegal). Some charities can use leftover paint and most batteries can be recycled
- Use mains electricity rather than batteries when possible (although a battery pack is better than a constantly-on transformer) and if you need them choose rechargeable batteries.

For information about the safe disposal of hazard waste, contact your local authority waste officer.

### Laundry

Washing clothes involves using a variety of resources, but the impact of washing on the environment can be reduced, as well as saving money.



### **Action points to reduce the impact of laundry**

- Use the lowest recommended temperature – the temperature has the biggest impact on energy use
- Only use full loads – maximize the amount of washing for the water and electricity used
- Vary detergent quantities according to the water hardness and amount of soiling
- Choose products to minimize packaging
- Wash according to the recommended washing cycle
- Use eco-friendly products
- Ecoballs™ can negate or reduce the need for washing detergent
- Rather than use a tumble drier, dry clothes outside, or inside on a clothes horse

For laundry hints and tips from an industry body [www.washright.com](http://www.washright.com)



### Nappies

Nappies are one of our major waste problems. The average baby gets through almost 6,000 of them. Disposable nappies account for 4% of landfill waste where they can take 5000 years to decompose.

In terms of resources, it takes a cupful of crude oil to produce the plastic for one disposable nappy and in the UK alone seven million trees are felled annually to produce wood pulp for them.

Real nappies (washable cotton nappies) have come a long way since the toweling squares your grandmother used. Modern nappy designs and washing services make cloth a practicable option. For times when using real nappies are difficult, such as traveling, consider using 'alternative' disposables, which can be gel free and use unbleached paper pulp. Even using disposable nappies only part of the time helps.

The Women's Environmental Network is a good source of information on nappies and other similar matters.  
020 7481 9004 Fax: 020 7481 9144  
Nappies enquiries: Real Nappy helpline – 0845 8500 606  
Real Nappies for London – 0207 324 4709  
[www.wen.org.uk](http://www.wen.org.uk)

