

# Show Me the Money: 10 Simple Sustainability Steps People Can Take to Save Money and the Environment

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1. **Recycle and Think Before You Toss:** Just over half the aluminum cans in the US are recycled. We throw away enough cans in 3 months to rebuild the entire US commercial air fleet. Recycled cans use 95% less energy, save money and create jobs. Minnesotans annually toss 1 million tons of recyclable materials worth \$312 million and their disposal costs \$200 million. If the US did all the recycling and composting possible, we could eliminate 21% of all US coal-fired power plants.
2. **Use Rechargeable Batteries:** Using rechargeable batteries that are recycled can eliminate a great deal of unnecessary waste and mining while performing as well if not better than alkaline batteries. While rechargeables cost slightly more, just two of them when properly charged can save more than \$1000 over their life, which is more than a 100-fold return on your \$6 investment.
3. **Switch to LED Light Bulbs:** Compared to 60W incandescent, each saves \$102 over 22 yr life with 1< year payback, 85% less energy + reduced AC, reduces CO2 by 86 lbs per yr (= Not driving car for 3 days) & saves 25 bulbs from landfill. By 2027, widespread use could save equivalent annual electricity from 44 large electric power plants and \$30 billion total savings.
4. **Do Smarter Commuting:** Switching to public transit or biking can save \$9,343/yr and reduce household CO2 emissions 10%. Compared to other household actions, public transit or biking can be 10 times greater in reducing greenhouse gases. You can save 25%+ on your fuel bill by keeping your tires properly inflated, avoiding sudden starts/stops and driving the speed limit.
5. **Switch to a Battery-Powered Electric Lawn Mower:** One hour of gas mowing emits the same amount of smog as driving a car 340 miles. A battery-powered electric mower has instant start, fewer emissions and 1/10<sup>th</sup> the noise, while costing 14x less to operate, only \$5/year vs. \$70.
6. **Avoid Plastic Water Bottles and Use Refillable Ones:** Save \$364/person and up to \$6,000/yr for a family by making the switch and reduce the 50 billion plastic water bottles Americans used in 2006, of which only 23% were recycled, resulting in 38 billion water bottles landfilled annually.
7. **Eat Fewer Animal Products:** Vegetarian diets cut food costs and a vegan diet can save \$1277 a year. Direct US health care costs attributable to meat consumption are estimated at up to \$61.4 billion/yr (1992), including hypertension, heart disease, cancer and diabetes. According to the UN, global livestock production is one of the 2 or 3 gravest environmental threats and causes 18% of climate change. Low-meat diets could cut climate change costs in half by 2050, saving \$20 trillion.
8. **Consume Less Water:** Turn off the tap when brushing teeth (saves 1 gallon of water/use), use a faucet and shower aerator (half the water and hot water costs) and use a front-load washer (50% less water, 30% less energy). Save \$ & energy since water pumping is a city's largest energy use.
9. **Use Less Paper and Only Post-Consumer Recycled (PCR):** E-communications reduce paper 10-30%, duplex copying 20% and cloth napkins/towels 100% (\$1,354/\$1,000 over 5 years each). A ton of PCR paper saves enough energy to power a home 6 months, plus 7,000 gallons of water.
10. **Consume Less and Live Happier, More Fulfilled Lives:** Ask whether or not you really need something before purchasing it. Conscious consumption can save money and more fully meet your needs with less stuff. It's as simple as smiling, helping others and having fun & community.