

## 3 Easy Steps To An Eco-Friendly Home



It seems that these days, everyone is focused on how to make their homes more eco-friendly – that means “reduce, reuse, and recycle.” When folks hear this phrase, they tend to think of washing out soda cans and turning off the lights leaving a room. But there are other ways to take “greening-up” your living environment to the next level.

### Reduce

Reduce your dependence on disposable items. We’ve grown so accustomed to using something once or twice then tossing it out that most people have forgotten there’s another way. Returning to products that can be reused, like refillable pens and tape dispensers and razors with replaceable blades, will go a long way toward reducing what ends up in a landfill.

Reduce the packaging you buy. Did you know that as much as 50% of any purchase you make ends up in the trash as discarded packaging? Companies have gone nuts with the packaging, wrapping nearly everything in more paper, plastic, and cardboard than necessary. The trick is to avoid single-serving items, become loyal to brands that embrace minimal packaging and shop for larger quantities in bigger containers. Get in the habit of buying bulk foods, office supplies, cleaning products, toiletries, etc. and transferring them to your own smaller containers at home.

Reduce the urge to choose price over quality. It’s good to be cost-conscious, but you can save more by buying durable products that are made to last, even if they cost a few pennies more up-front. For example, cheap file folders or t-shirts or dish rags that fall apart after a few months’ use and have to be replaced not only create more trash than a more expensive brand that lasts for years, but also cost you more in the long-run.

### Reuse

Learn the fine art of repurposing. We throw a lot of things away because they stop serving their original purpose, but why can’t they be reborn to serve some other function? That old flowerpot may not hold water anymore, but it could hold pens on your desk or utensils on the kitchen counter. A dresser that your child has outgrown could be a great storage piece in your home office or craft room – you just have to think creatively.



Let your paper do double duty. Are you tossing out paper that still has life left in it? Pages that have printing on only one side can be flipped over and run through the printer again for rough drafts. Mailing envelopes are great for making lists or taking messages. Manila folders can be turned inside out and used again. Old newspapers, magazines, and junk mail make excellent drop-cloths for arts and crafts projects.

## Recycle

Go beyond the bin out front. You can actually recycle a lot more than you think, but you may have to do some research first. Packing peanuts, carpet padding, compact discs, even computer components can all find a second life as part of a new recycled product.

Recycle useful items. Recycling isn't just for "trash" – it's also a great way to let others enjoy the things you no longer have need of. Thrift and consignment stores will find buyers for your old clothing, sports equipment, tools and household items. And local shelters can always use your donations. You're helping someone else, clearing the clutter, and cutting back on trash – a win-win-win!

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