



# Personal Impact Audit Checklist

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*This audit helps you identify things TODAY that you can do  
RIGHT NOW to help live sustainably in Minnesota.*

## Reduce Your Personal Impact in the KITCHEN

Are your appliances bigger than they need to be? Smaller appliances use much less energy than larger ones. Think about your needs carefully before you design or redesign your kitchen.

- The REFRIGERATOR** sucks up a lot of juice. Here's what you can do to make sure you're getting the best bang for your buck.
- [ x ] Keep it clean. Storing stuff on top of your refrigerator actually makes it work harder – interfering with its operation and using more energy.
  - [ x ] Keep it full. It uses less energy to cool a full refrigerator. And you save money by eating at home, too!
  - [ x ] Clean the condenser coils once a year.
  - [ x ] The manufacturer's recommended settings are most efficient – check your manual.
  - [ x ] Replace bad seals. Check the refrigerator door (look and also feel) to make sure the air is not escaping. If you feel cool air, replace the seal.
  - [ x ] Unplug it if you're not using it.
  - [ x ] Replace your old refrigerator (made before 1993) with an Energy Star efficient appliance and save \$120 on average per year.
  - [ x ] Keep local and organic foods in your fridge.

**Using a DISHWASHER** actually costs less than washing by hand with hot water, if you use it right.

- [ x ] Don't rinse your dishes before placing them in the dishwasher. This saves the planet 6,500 gallons of water per year and you \$30 per year. Scrape your food scraps into a compost bin.
- [ x ] Run your dishwasher on the economy cycle or prop the dishwasher door open to air-dry, rather than using the heater dry function.

- [ x ] Only run your dishwasher when it is completely full.
- [ x ] Use a non-toxic dishwashing detergent.
- [ x ] If you do not use a dishwasher, wash dishes in a plugged sink or tub to avoid constant running water.

**The KITCHEN SINK** can help you save water and water your plants.

- [ x ] Use cold water, not hot, to run your garbage disposal if you are not composting your food scraps.
- [ x ] Water your plants with leftover water from your meal preparation or drinking glass.
- [ x ] Keep plants above your sink to absorb the humidity, and water them right away with leftover water.
- [ x ] Check for drips in the tap and under the sink. Replace bad seals that are costing you water and money.

## The STOVE

- [ x ] Save energy and time when boiling water by placing a lid on the pot.
- [ x ] A few minutes before you're finished cooking, turn the burners off completely. The residual heat will finish the job.
- [ x ] Preheating an oven uses extra energy, so only do this when a precise temperature is necessary. Reheating frozen meals do not need a preheated oven, but baking cookies will.

## The OVEN

- [ x ] Self-cleaning gas or electric models have more insulation than other ovens, so they're more energy efficient. Yet using the self-cleaning feature once a month will use more energy than you save.
- [ x ] A heated oven loses 20% of its heat every time it's opened. Use the light to check on your food.
- [ x ] Plan your cooking or baking schedule. Cook more than one item right after

each other to reduce reheating the oven again later or the next day.

## Reduce Your Personal Impact in the BATHROOM

- [ x ] Turn off your exhaust fan when you leave. It uses energy, and it sucks in hot/cool air from the rest of the house.
- [ x ] Save water by turning off the tap while you brush your teeth.
- [ x ] Change your faucets, shower heads and toilets to low-flow models.
- [ x ] Keep them clean! Sediment and residue from water can clog up the fixtures and cause you to use more hot water.
- [ x ] Repair leaky faucets or toilets. A single dripping hot water faucet can waste up to 200 gallons of water a month.
- [ x ] Take showers (10-15 gallons of water used) rather than baths (30 or more gallons of water used).
- [ x ] Be a speed racer. Keep your shower time to five minutes or less.
- [ x ] If you shave in the shower, fill a small cup with water to rinse your razor and turn off the water.
- [ x ] Use non-toxic shampoos, soaps and bathroom cleaners.

## Reduce Your Personal Impact in the LIVING ROOM

- [ x ] Keep it clean. Burn clean, dry, hard wood. Wet wood produces more smoke, and soft woods like pine make more emissions that leave deposits in your chimney.
- [ x ] Open the damper when the fire's going in order to prevent carbon monoxide from backing up into your house. Remember to close it when the fire is out completely or your chimney will suck the heat right out of your house.
- [ x ] Replace all lighting with fluorescent light bulbs.
- [ x ] Thinking of redecorating? Be sure to use low- or no-VOC paint options to reduce toxic offgassing into your home.

## Reduce Your Personal Impact in the HOME OFFICE

- [ x ] Turn off your computer and printer when you're not using them, or you can use the power or energy save option.
- [ x ] Unplug chargers for cell phones and other rechargeable devices when not in use; they still use energy when not charging but plugged in.
- [ x ] Reuse envelopes and backsides of paper, print double-sided and purchase high recycled content paper.



## Reduce Your Personal Impact in your LAUNDRY ROOM

### The Washer

- [x] Wash only full loads of laundry.
- [x] Front loading washing machines can save as much as 40 cents per load.
- [x] Use cold or warm setting for your washer, not hot. Many detergents are designed for use in cold water. This can save 10-20 cents per load.
- [x] Use non-toxic laundry detergents to avoid harmful exposure to chemical detergents and water pollution.

### The Dryer

- [x] Dry clothes the natural way when possible. Hang clothes outside on warm days and hang up lines inside for the winter.
- [x] Gas clothes dryers are generally less expensive to operate than electric dryers.
- [x] Irons use as much energy as ten 100-watt light bulbs! Pull your clothes out of the dryer immediately and hang them up to reduce your use of the iron. Consider purchasing iron-free clothing too.
- [x] Clean out your lint filter every time you use your dryer so it doesn't have to work as hard.

## Reduce Your Personal Impact in your GARAGE

- [x] If it's attached, keep your door closed as much as possible to reduce cool/warm air from getting inside your home.
- [x] You can save between 8-10% of your energy costs by insulating the floor over unheated spaces such as crawl-spaces, basements and garages.
- [x] Insulate the inside of your garage door with fiberglass duct wrap.
- [x] Save energy by removing one of the lightbulbs from your garage door opener.
- [x] Replace old freezers/refrigerators. One large refrigerator is more efficient than two smaller ones, and those made after 1993 are Energy Star efficient.
- [x] If your water heater is in an unheated garage, check to see if it's self-insulated. If not, insulate it yourself using specified guidelines for your model.
- [x] Use energy-saving fluorescent lighting with electronic ballasts for your garage working area.

## Reduce Your Personal Impact in your CAR

- [x] Get your car inspected. A clean and well-maintained car drastically reduces your impact on the environment.
- [x] Fuel up when it's cool outside. When the temperature is high, gas fumes heat up and create more ozone.
- [x] Use biofuels when possible.
- [x] Walk, bike or take the bus/light rail when possible. (Look up bus/light rail schedules at [www.metrotransit.org](http://www.metrotransit.org).) Vehicles are one of the top contributors to global warming.
- [x] When purchasing a new vehicle, consider car-sharing instead ([www.hourcar.org](http://www.hourcar.org)) or look into fuel-efficient models such as a hybrid.

## Reduce Your Personal Impact OUTSIDE

- [x] Dispose of paint cans and toxic products properly. Check with your county to find a household hazardous waste drop-off facility or check [www.green-guardian.com](http://www.green-guardian.com).
- [x] Use non-toxic or natural bug deterrents and lawn maintenance products to avoid contamination of our water.
- [x] During high ozone days, your child should play inside or participate in less strenuous outdoor activities, like swimming.
- [x] When exercising outside, avoid busy streets and do so early or late in the day to keep your exposure to pollution low.
- [x] When cutting your lawn, keep clippings on the lawn, consider a low-maintenance push mower (no emissions!), and be sure to sweep your grass clippings off of any paved areas to avoid phosphorus entering our waterways.

## Reduce Your Personal Impact AROUND YOUR HOME

- [x] Purchase a carbon monoxide detector. Rooms above or near a garage are at risk for the highest levels, which can be fatal.
- [x] Make sure all paint in your home is lead-free and low- or no-VOC. Both can be harmful to your health while lead paint in particular can be permanently damaging to your child's health.
- [x] Check furnace or heat pump filters once a month for blockages and replace them regularly. A dirty air filter can

increase your energy costs and lead to early equipment failure.

- [x] Get a licensed professional to check your heating and cooling systems once a year for efficiency and safety.
- [x] Caulk and weather-strip all leaky windows, baseboards, and doors.
- [x] Properly seal all attic vents and ducts. Sealing your ducts can save up to \$140 annually on heating bills and ensures every room is heated consistently.
- [x] A programmable thermostat can save you \$100 a year when programmed and used properly.
- [x] Replace traditional lightbulbs and fixtures with compact fluorescents. They cost a bit more, but use two-thirds less energy, and can last up to ten times longer than incandescent bulbs.
- [x] Check your ducts for air leaks. First look for sections that should be joined but have separated. Then look for obvious holes.
- [x] If you use duct tape to repair your seal or ducts, spend the money on high-quality tape to avoid cracking and loss of bond over time.
- [x] You can save 3% per day on your heating bill for every one degree that you lower your thermostat setting. For example, if you normally keep your thermostat at 75 degrees and you lower to 72 degrees, you can save 9%!
- [x] Also consider turning your thermostat down (or up for air conditioning) 5-7% at night.
- [x] Turn heat down when having guests. People generate heat, especially in small places.
- [x] Keep blinds and curtains closed during the warmest parts of the day in the summer.
- [x] If you leave a room, turn off the lights and appliances.
- [x] Recycle. ♻️

**Copy for yourself, friends, family and co-workers!**



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