a non-expert's guide to

Living More Sustainably

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I always assumed that caring for the environment meant making big, sacrificial changes in your life. And indeed - it can mean that, and perhaps should, if we hope to make lasting changes that will save our planet. However, big changes are usually overwhelming to even think about, much less make, which is where I've always gotten stuck. Lately though, I've learned that sustainability is also about making small changes that benefit the environment, the community, and the economy - so I've made a list of some (fairly easy) ways you can test the waters of living a more sustainable life.

- Mariellyn Grace, sustainability non-expert

ENERGY

- Use LED, halogen or CFL bulbs that last longer.
- Turn the thermostat up a few degrees in summer and down a few degrees in winter.
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room.
- Consider using a clothesline or drying rack to dry your clothes - or even just one load!
- Buy energy-efficient appliances when you need to replace old ones.
- Use curtains or blinds to help keep the cold or heat out.
- Clean or replace filters on your heating & cooling system.
- Wash your clothes in cold water.
- Limit the use of hot water when hand-washing dishes.
- Ask your power company about switching to renewable energy sources.
- Talk to a solar company about financing options that could mean you'll pay about the same for solar energy as for grid energy!

- When hand-washing dishes, use a bowl to hold the water instead of letting it run constantly.
- Using a dishwasher can actually use less water than hand-washing dishes!
- Make sure you only run full loads of dishes and laundry.
- If you don't have a full load of laundry, consider hand-washing.
- Time your shower, or use a water-saving showerhead.
- Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth or shaving.
- Re-use water from your child's kiddie pool to water garden plants.
- When traveling, reuse hotel towels instead of getting new ones every day.

PLASTIC

- Buy reusable water bottles or a pitcher and fill with tap water.
- Take reusable bags to the grocery store.
- Try to avoid buying plastic-wrapped products.
- Repurpose glass jars - they make great containers for leftovers!
- Use washable metal or glass straws instead of plastic ones.
- Buy bigger bottles of products like shampoo - it uses less plastic in the end, and costs less!
- Don't use disposable cutlery if eating at home.
- If you must use disposable dishes, paper is better than plastic.
- Buy a bamboo toothbrush instead of a plastic one - it will biodegrade faster.
- Use reusable beeswax wraps instead of plastic wrap or plastic sandwich bags.

PAPER

- Have receipts emailed to you instead of printed.
- Only print documents when necessary.
- Sign up for e-newsletters and e-statements when possible.
- Use reusable cloths instead of paper towels.
- Use a handkerchief instead of paper tissues.
- Use and reuse gift bags instead of wrapping paper.
- Do not use tissue paper in gift bags, or save and reuse it.
- Use your phone or computer for note-taking.
- Collect and recycle scrap paper.
- Use double-sided printing where possible.
- Purchase digital subscriptions to newspapers and magazines.
- Plant a tree!

- Eat less meat (it has a huge carbon footprint!) or eat sustainably produced meat
- Grow your own produce in a backyard or container garden.
- Try to make only as much food as you need.
- If you have leftovers, eat them the next day, or turn them into compost (it's easier than you'd think!).
- Buy your produce from a local farmer's market, or join a CSA (community supported agriculture)
- Start a community garden or participate in one.

- Buy less stuff!
- Avoid buying single-use products, such as plastic water bottles.
- Donate unused furniture or clothing to a thrift store.
- Shop at thrift stores for secondhand items.
- Reuse old t-shirts as rags for cleaning.
- Buy Fairtrade certified products, which means the producer was paid a fair price.
- Buy from B-corps, which are socially responsible corporations.
- Look for clothing made with sustainable materials, such as organic cotton or linen.
- Instead of buying a gift, consider donating to a charity in the person's name.
- Upcycle your furniture or buy used pieces.
- Mend clothes instead of throwing them out.
- Don't use one-day shipping unless you really need to.
- Buy from locally-owned stores instead of big retailers.

TRANSPORT

- Walk or bike to your destination when possible.
- Use public transportation when available.
- Drive instead of flying, which is a big contributor of greenhouse gases.
- If you must fly, try to book a direct flight to cut down on emissions.
- Organize carpools to work, school, sports, or other events.
- Consider a hybrid or electric vehicle the next time you buy a car.
- Use Zoom or similar services for work meetings when possible.

- Spend more time in nature
- Recycle and reuse!
- Vote!
- Elect candidates with good climate plans.
- Talk about climate change.
- Travel to state and national parks.
- Pick up trash.
- Disinvest from fossil fuels.
- When traveling, stay and eat at local establishments instead of chains.
- Extend your environmental efforts to your school, church, or club.
- Volunteer!
- Calculate your household's carbon footprint.
- Do a home energy audit.