

THE LAZY ENVIRONMENTALIST

An underachiever's guide
to saving the world with
tips even you can use

BY MAGGIE MARTON

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NVIRONMENTAL BEST-SELLERS, eco-news Web sites, and global-warming documentaries use terrifying statistics to beat the message into our heads every day: the earth faces serious destruction unless we make some changes to how we live our lives. Many "how to" books offer steps to a greener existence, but I'm tired of reading lofty, unattainable, unrealistic solutions. I refuse to risk cultivating BO by using natural deodorant (most don't contain antiperspirants), and fast-degrading toilet paper terrifies me. And while I'm sure it's environmentally friendly to purchase recycled-rubber or vegan shoes, my obsession with footwear is too great to make the sustainable

choice over the cute-and-on-sale one.

But do we all need to become hemp-wearing, makeup-eschewing naturalists in order to make a difference? Hell no! I am a lazy, TV-watching, video-game-playing, newspaper-reading, lipstick-buying, beer-drinking environmentalist. And while I will never chain myself to a redwood, every day I attempt to make greener choices.

So how do I make a difference without the stress, the cost, the guilt trip, or the effort? I do it by targeting five easy areas for simple conservation: water, power, recyclables, errands, and self-care. The steps below are broken down by levels of effort required. None mandate a scientific explanation, and each will save you time and money and help you live a lazier—er, I mean, simpler life.



Splish Splash, I Was Taking a Bath

You turn on your shower and let it run until it's just the right temperature, unconsciously wasting all that cold water running down the drain. I once met a girl who actually put a bucket in the shower, collected that cold water, and used it to refill her toilet tank. Good for her, but most of us do not want a skanky, water-filled bucket sitting in the bathroom, and I refuse to time my flushes in order to pour in that bucket water. There are simpler ways to conserve water, and none require removing the lid to the toilet tank.

Laziest: My favorite way to save water without even lifting a finger is to use my dishwasher. Running a full dishwasher uses less water than handwashing all your dirty dishes. To also save some money on your electric bill, turn off the heated-dry feature of your dishwasher, and let your dishes drip-dry.

Pretty lazy: Put drought-tolerant plants, like a bluebeard or moonbeam, in your garden. A little rain takes care of everything. You won't need to drag around a hose, so you'll save yourself some major backaches and time.

Easiest on your wallet: Reducing a few extra minutes of water flow each day makes a huge difference over time. Turn your faucet off while brushing your teeth and washing your face. Same thing with washing your hands. Wet your hands, and turn off the water to lather up. Also, try to cut one minute off your shower time.

Challenging: Find ways to reuse water. If you have a fish tank, use the water you remove when cleaning the tank to water plants. When you soak a new water filter, you can use that carbonized water in houseplants, too.

Bonus: Buy a dual-flush toilet. It's a big purchase and potentially a big installation. But with two flush options, you can choose how much water you use per flush—less for a number one, more for a number two—which will save an enormous amount of water over time.



When you unplug your cell from the power cord, the outlet stays active and continues to drain energy. Unplug the cord, save some energy, and save some money on your electric bill.

You Light Up My Life

My sister constantly leaves her cell-phone charger plugged into her car's adapter, which obviously drains the car's battery. It's the same in your home—anything plugged in, whether or not it's in use, draws power. When you unplug your cell from the power cord, the outlet stays active and continues to drain energy. Unplug the cord, save some energy, and save some money on your electric bill. Here are some other simple steps that would make Edison proud.

Lazyest: Keep the freezer full. It will operate more efficiently, and you'll have plenty of easy-to-prepare meals on hand.

Pretty lazy: Swap your incandescent light bulbs for compact fluorescent ones. Plus, according to Energy Star, each bulb you switch will save you \$30 over the life of that bulb. The catch, though, is that CFLs are more efficient only for lights that are on for 15 minutes or more at a time.

Easiest on your wallet: Focus on everyday power savings. Flip off any light not in use. Keep your computer

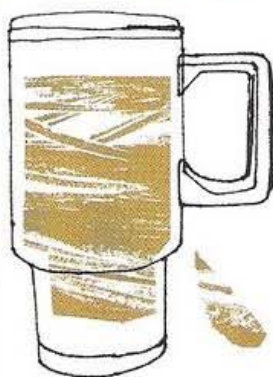
on sleep mode. Better yet, turn it off when you're done. Turn off all unused peripherals (printer, scanner, fax, etc.). Also, appliances with an LED light, like most coffeemakers, are secret energy drainers. Unplug them when not in use to save even more money. An easy way to remember to take this extra step: plug all of your computer or entertainment equipment into a power strip that you can switch off after you shut down.

Challenging: A fun, selfish way to save some energy is through the use of dimmer switches, which are inexpensive (Home Depot has an array for under \$20) and simple to install. Soft lighting hides blemishes, creates a sexy atmosphere, and lowers the bottom line on your electric bill.

Bonus: Say you're in the market for a new microwave or DVD player. Buy Energy Star-qualified appliances and electronics, and you'll conserve energy and save some serious cash over the life of the product. Also, LCD televisions use less energy than traditional models. That's a great excuse to trade up your TV!



REUSE



Reuse It or Lose It

While recycling is good, reusing is better. Of course, recycling is crucial, but any chance to reuse can be fun, creative, and money-saving. For instance, my mom collects glass bottles. Although she can get carried away gathering up empty liquor bottles at a party, she utilizes all that glass to make vases, candle holders, picture frames—whatever she can think of. It provides a creative outlet for her, and those eco-friendly accessories make unique gifts. Not everyone wants to clean out other people's recycling bins, so here are some steps to reuse and repurpose everyday items.

Laziest: Dig up that old library card, and check out or rent DVDs instead of buying. Get your movies delivered right to your door and you not only avoid the hassle of going to the video store, but you also save emissions by not driving around town!

Pretty lazy: Get your caffeine fix with a reusable travel mug. All those cups and cardboard sleeves add up to a lot of waste. Money-saving extra: many coffee shops give a discount for reusing mugs.

Easiest on your wallet: Those to-go boxes you eat from in the office every day, not to mention plastic utensils, ketchup packets, and those little stirrers for your tea, create lots of trash. Pack your lunch in reusable containers and you'll also save yourself a fortune on workday food costs.

Challenging: Carry a reusable tote to the grocery store or drugstore. If you forget your bags or make an unexpected stop, use the plastic bags you get to line your trash can and save money by not purchasing trash bags. Use the savings to buy more reusable tote bags!

Bonus: Get your clean on! Donate old clothes, used cell phones, books, CDs, electronics—anything you no longer need—to charity. Get that warm, fuzzy feeling of helping someone else while de-cluttering your house. Then, next year you can gather up those donation receipts and deduct them from your taxes.



WALK

Out and About

I have a confession: I commute 30 miles every day. Driving through city traffic for nearly two hours a day is not very eco-friendly, but unfortunately, the geography of my town disallows any other option. Luckily, though, I discovered several ways to offset the emis-

sions from my commute that are pretty darn easy.

Laziest: I no longer take receipts from ATMs, gas pumps, or any other place where I have a choice. It's only a few inches of paper, but imagine how many you get in a year.

Pretty lazy: Instead of paying your teenage neighbor to wash your car, take it to a car wash. It actually uses less water, and many car washes reuse rinse water.

Easiest on your wallet: Fully inflated tires ensure that your car runs more efficiently, which saves big on harmful emissions. To go a step further, after filling the

gas tank, let the pump sit for an extra three seconds. This prevents those last few drops of gas from splashing out and contaminating groundwater. Plus, at these prices, we can use every extra drop of gas we can get!

Challenging: Though it takes a little bit of planning, combine errands into one trip. Go to one shopping center, and walk from store to store instead of driving to each new shop. Better yet, hit a superstore or warehouse like Costco once a month, and stock up on nonperishables like cereal and contact-lens solution. This will result in fewer shopping trips, saving you time, gas money, and carbon-dioxide emissions.

Bonus: Rather than go to the gym, walk, bike, or Rollerblade instead. All those treadmills and televisions suck energy, those mountains of towels require hot water to wash, and harsh chemicals sanitize the locker rooms. Get your exercise outside and you'll not only save all those resources, but your lungs will love the fresh air, too. Get a dog to walk and play with daily, and maybe you can even cancel your gym membership!

Legend has it that hangovers are far less severe after a night of overindulging in organic wine because of fewer added chemicals.



Damn Right I Look Good

When I evaluated my daily routine for environmental pitfalls, I discovered that my beauty regimen created an enormous amount of garbage—cleansing cloths, cotton swabs, cotton pads, disposable emery boards and razor cartridges, not to mention dozens of lotions and free samples stashed under my bathroom sink. My closet was even worse: overly dyed fabrics, dry-clean-only care labels, and yes, even some polyester. With so many different ingredients, packages, brands, and fibers, selecting the most eco-friendly products is a challenge. Here are some ways to wade through products and clothing to find sustainable yet indulgent options. Fashionistas, take heart: none require scratchy hemp.

Laziest: Products wrapped in cellophane, stuck to a cardboard sleeve, and surrounded by thick plastic waste an unnecessary amount of resources. Select products with minimal packaging.

Pretty lazy: Skim the labels on makeup, skin-care, and hair-care products. Lengthy lists mean more chemical additives, which not only harm the environment but could also be

unhealthy for you. Choose products with fewer ingredients (or ingredients you can pronounce).

Easiest on your wallet: Wash your clothes on the cold setting of your washer. Unless you've spilled something major on yourself, cold water cleans your clothes just as well as hot. Only use warmer settings for things that need to be disinfected, like dishtowels or washcloths. Cold water can also make your clothing last longer, because fibers tend to deteriorate less quickly than they do in hot water. For extra brownie points, hang your clothes to dry and save big on electricity.

Challenging: Even the best skin-care routine can't get rid of the puffy, bloodshot eyes and gray, pasty skin that a night of overindulging can visit onto your gorgeous face. The party girl's solution? Drink organic champagne, wine, or beer. Legend has it that hangovers are far less severe after a night of overindulging in organic wine because of fewer added chemicals. Organic alcohol doesn't use harmful pesticides in production, which means you're ingesting fewer toxins. It's typically tougher to locate and may require more than a trip to your corner liquor store, but the Internet has lots of resources. So a toast! To you! For drinking organic booze!

Bonus: Purchase clothing made from bamboo. The fibers feel as soft as cotton, but bamboo grows more quickly, which allows for more sustainable harvests. Though bamboo clothing presents a shopping challenge (not many stores carry it yet, and it's still rather expensive), there are a few online resources. One I like is www.tranquilit.com.

Select one of these tips to implement today, or try them all.

Ultimately, it's not about making radical life changes; it's about maximizing your everyday choices. With a little bit of practice, sustainability becomes second nature. And eventually, that fast-degrading toilet paper might not seem so bad after all. **B**



must have tuckered her out! Thanks for being such a rad magazine, I can't sing your praises enough. *Camille Stengel, Calgary, AB*

Homebrewing Brew-ha-ha

I'm a recent convert to *BUST*, and I was overjoyed by the "Bitches' Brew" article (Dec/Jan '08). However, as a seasoned homebrewer and brew-store employee, I'm familiar with the basics of brewing, and the author's instructions alarmed me for a few reasons. First, 2 oz. dry ale yeast is a silly-huge amount for a small batch (usually a 6 – 11 gram sachet is sufficient). Second, when priming a batch, it is standard practice to use $\frac{3}{4}$ cup priming sugar for 5 gallons. An excess of priming sugar can lead to overcarbonation and exploding bottles, something sure to discourage the busy, fabulous lady from trying this project again. And third, I recommend waiting until the airlock shows no action for several minutes before bottling. The patience can pay off—if there's still too much fermentable sugar at bottling, the risk of overcarbonation rises. *Liz Pearse, Bloomington, IN*

I have been a faithful reader for several years and was so excited to see your article about homebrewing. However, I must object to the advice that "Anything that comes into contact with the beer should be washed in bleach." When phenols (found in malt, wort, and, of course, beer) react with bleach, chlorophenol forms and imparts a medicinal aroma and can adversely affect the taste of your homebrew. Cleansers such as iodophor or sodium percarbonate are much more effective and easy-to-use products; boiling in hot water is an option for some pieces of equipment, such as bottle caps. I recognize that there are some homebrewers who use bleach, but there are much better, more eco-friendly ways to sanitize your gear. *Anna Forsher, Silver Spring, MD*

Oops, We Did it Again

Due to an editing error, we gave an incorrect Web address for the Queen Bee Creations Chickpea Twig Messenger Diaper Bag on page 61 of the Dec/Jan '08 issue's Holiday Gift Guide. That bag can be found at www.queenbee-creations.com.

Get it off your chest! Send feedback to: Letters, *BUST* Magazine, P.O. Box 1016, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10276. Email: letters@bust.com. Include your name, city, state, and email address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

CONTRIBUTORS



Maggie Marton, who penned "The Lazy Environmentalist," lives and writes in Washington, DC. She draws creative inspiration from the city, which is bursting with stories about more than just politics. Her career began as a fact-checker, which she found just boring enough to abandon to study writing in graduate school. Now, nearly finished with her thesis on narrative nonfiction at Johns Hopkins University, her focus is on freelance writing with a sense of humor. Her work has appeared on Nationalgeographic.com and in *DC LEARNs*, and she's a regular contributor to the blog *Conversations with Famous Writers*. Visit her online at www.maggiemarton.com.



Kavel Rafferty, who illustrated "The Lazy Environmentalist," is an artist from the U.K. living in Stockholm, Sweden. She loves dancing around badly to northern soul and R&B (the old kind) till the early hours. Rafferty also likes vintage shopping, where she finds inspiration for her work; decorating her apartment with the junk she buys; and adding to her collection of record sleeves, which she documents on her retro-graphic-design blog, *Record Envelope*. She can think of no better way to spend a cold Swedish evening than watching *America's Next Top Model* while eating potato chips (and appreciating the irony).



Candacy Taylor, whose work is featured in "Dishing it Out," is a Bay Area cultural critic and photographer with a master's degree in visual criticism from the California College of the Arts. Taylor's work explores labor and gender issues in American culture. In addition to receiving numerous grants, her project documenting career waitresses has been featured in over 20 publications, including the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *AARP The Magazine*, and on NPR. Cornell University Press will publish a book on the waitress project in 2009. Her two most recent projects document older female tattoo artists and beauty-shop culture.



Chris Verene, the photographer who shot our fashion story "The Kiss," became a feminist activist at his Atlanta high school in the mid-'80s and has been an avid *BUST* reader since 1999. Verene's artwork documents his family and friends over the past 22 years in his rural Illinois hometown. "The Kiss," is inspired by Verene's "Self-Esteem Salon" performance-art project, wherein he and his staff help people do activities to boost their self-esteem. He lives in Brooklyn, NY, with his wife and bandmate, musician Ani Cordero. They have an awesome toddler named Nicolas Fernando. See Verene's work at www.chrisverene.com.

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