

5 top tips for going green in 2012

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If you've ever considered living a greener lifestyle, there's never been a better time to do it than at the start of a new year. There are many things you can do, big and small, to improve your carbon footprint – and many of them ultimately save you money, too. [Low emission cars](#) enable you to do your bit to make that change, but how else can you help?

1. Set your thermostat

Want to save on heating and cooling costs? Doing so is as simple as setting your home's thermostat to a few degrees lower in the winter and a few degrees higher during the warmer months. It's unlikely that you'll notice the difference, but if in winter you feel a slight chill, the most economical (and environmentally-friendly) thing you can do is layer up. Dig out that old cosy jumper and save yourself a few pounds by wearing it.

2. Watch your washing

How many times do you bung washing into a dryer per week? And how many times do you need to ensure that pair of trousers is dry immediately?

If you're in no hurry to dry something, invest in a cheap clothes airer and hang your clothes on it to dry. If you're lucky enough to have a garden or yard, make use of your washing line. Doing this even as little as once a week is bound to save you a fortune over the year and you'll be safe in the knowledge that you're 'doing your bit' as well.

Also, why not wash clothes in cold water? According to an article on the website [Worldwatch](#), as much as 85 per cent of the energy used to machine wash clothes goes on heating the water.

3. Hybrid cars

Hybrid cars don't just benefit the environment, they save you money too. More economical on petrol use, a [Honda](#) hybrid car, for instance, uses two sources of power to drive – a small, efficient petrol engine and an electric motor.

As the electric motor is helping out, the petrol engine doesn't need to work quite as hard, which results in cleaner air and enhanced fuel economy for you. With plenty of [new car offers](#) available, you may just find that going hybrid is the best thing you and your family could ever do.

4. Borrowing

This goes without saying, but borrowing things from friends and family can save you a great deal of money over the year, as well as being environmentally friendly. Do you have a neighbour who reads the same daily paper as you? It makes perfect sense to offer to share, saving you both money and one of you a trip to the shop! Elsewhere, borrow tools from friends or start a book share with family members.

Sharing lifts to work can also save you a small fortune over the year. And remember to drive at the speed limit and not over, as not only is this safer but it'll also save you money and benefit the environment.

5. Recycle, recycle, recycle!

Many of us have recycling bins in our back gardens or yards, but how many of us are really bothering to make use of them. Organising your rubbish in this way is that little bit more time consuming but will quickly become a habit.

Create a homemade compost bin, which will come in really handy if you're a keen gardener.

So, there you have it, our top tips for a greener 2012. It's all about making a few small changes.