



TIPS ON HOW TO LIVE MORE SUSTAINABLY

OK, we know real change needs to come from above, and the climate crisis can't be solved by an LED light bulb or two. Still, we can do much day-to-day to save energy, reduce waste, and live more sustainably. Read on to learn tips from your Queens neighbors (plus advice from William Norton from The Center for NY Neighborhoods.) Please share, and if you have your own advice, email Victoria at vadler4444@gmail.com or Meredith at meredithfaltin@yahoo.com and we'll add it! Updated on January 24, 2020.

REDUCE ENERGY USE

1. Unplug appliances when not in use. To make this easy: Use power strips so you can easily switch off the power.

Cable boxes, DVD players, video game consoles, computers, automatic coffee makers, alarm clocks (anything with a clock or Internet connectivity) drain substantial energy even when turned off or in sleep/standby mode. **75% of energy usage comes from home electronics which are turned off!** According to the website below: "standby power consumption in an average home ranges from 5 percent to 10 percent of your household energy consumption. It can also account for about 1 percent of worldwide carbon dioxide emissions."

<https://science.howstuffworks.com/environmental/green-tech/sustainable/smart-power-strip.htm>

Better yet, invest in a "smart power strip" which automatically shuts down the power on products when they go into standby mode. See below for an image of a BITS Unlimited "smart strip".



According to our Jackson Heights neighbor Meredith: *"I've been unplugging appliances (toaster, microwave, shutting down the computer at night) every time I'm not using them for a while now, and I noticed a savings in my energy bill right away. This month, my Con Ed bill is \$21.21."*

2. **Keep the WIFI turned off and unplugged at night.** You'll save energy and also protect your family's health. (Multiple studies have linked WIFI with possible adverse health effects, including cancer and sleep disruptions.) Don't worry - your phone alarm will still work with Ethernet.

3. **Buy a Kill a Watt Meter.** It's a gadget that measures just how much energy your appliances drain. According to our Jackson Heights neighbor John: *"You plug it into an electrical receptacle, then plug an appliance into it, and the display displays power consumption. You can see which appliances use power when they are off, see how much power your computer uses in sleep mode vs. off, compare published performance vs. actual, etc. It's fun and easy to use."*
<http://www.p3international.com/products/P4400.html>

4. **Run appliances (washing machine, dishwasher) during non-peak hours.** During peak hours, when there is the greatest demand for electricity, energy is more likely to be drawn from "dirtier" sources, so using appliances during non-peak times is more eco-friendly. How can you do this conveniently? Many appliances - such as your dishwasher or washing machine - can be programmed to run in the middle of the night.

You may want to consider signing up for the ConEd Time-of-Use program which offers discounted prices for off-peak use.

<https://www.coned.com/en/save-money/energy-saving-programs/time-of-use>)

5. **Buy Energy Star models.** If your appliances are 10 years old or older, consider replacing them with new Energy Star models, which use considerably less energy.
6. **Use appliances wisely.** Turn off the heat dry feature of the dishwasher - this is a major energy drain. Use the air dry cycle instead. Always use the cold cycle when washing clothes. 90% of energy used by a washing machine is devoted to heating the water.
7. **Invest in high-efficiency faucets and showerheads; you can also get a high-efficiency toilet.** Make sure the coop hot water is set to 120 degrees.
8. **Switch to LED lightbulbs (of course).** A no brainer, but it does make a big difference. Also, look beyond your apartment: does your coop use LED's for your coop's common spaces?
9. **Use energy mindfully!**

Arif shared: "The amount of energy we consume in the US compared to many other countries is pretty egregious. We use approximately 12,071 kw per person per year. The average UK citizen uses 4,795 kw per year." Pretty eye-opening!

GET YOUR ENERGY FROM RENEWABLES

1. **Enroll in community solar.**

If you're already enrolled in a clean energy ESCO, you may want to consider switching to community solar. According to Anika from Here Comes Solar, "*ESCO's hike up prices and buy Renewable Energy Credits rather than actually supporting renewable projects.*"

[Here's an article](#) that explains this.

"Community Solar is both cheaper and better. It's greener because it achieves all the environmental benefit of ESCOs in a much simpler way - the credits on your electric bill come directly from a single solar array and you're directly paying the owner of that array for their management of the system. It's much more transparent and, with fewer middlemen and markets, more of the benefit goes directly to renewable energy. And it's cheaper because it gives guaranteed savings (usually 10%), which is a huge difference from ESCOs."

All over NYC community solar projects are popping up. You can go to the sites of PowerMarket, BlueWave, or Onforce, or go to NYSERDA:

<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/NY-Sun/Solar-for-Your-Home/Community-Solar/Community-Solar-Map>.

There is typically a wait time of around 2-6 months for you to be assigned a site and for credits to start rolling in, but it does eventually happen! (PowerMarket in particular has many new sites that are up and running, so wait time should be on the shorter side.)

HEAT AND COOL YOUR HOME MORE EFFICIENTLY

1. **Insulate in the winter!** Use an air conditioner cover to insulate AC units left in window, or cover with a blanket. Apply caulk and weather stripping.
2. If you live in a building with centrally-controlled steam heat, you will need to **prevent drafts building-wide** before you can turn down the heat. Leontine, who consulted the city's Retrofit Accelerator, explained:

“As hot air rises and exits the top of the building, the lower air pressure pulls cold air in through windows and doors. The best way to prevent this is to seal any openings at the top of the building - in our case, the skylight, stairwell door, and doors/windows at the top of the elevator shaft...this is much more efficient and effective than individually weatherproofing windows and doors. Weatherproofing those things is helpful, but will be less effective if the stack effect isn't addressed first.”

<https://retrofitaccelerator.cityofnewyork.us/resources/building-envelope>

3. Consider an energy management system or a smart thermostat.

If you live in a coop with steam heat, you probably find that your rooms are often overheated. A smart thermostat helps address this, by using sensors that measure indoor temperature (rather than the temperature outside) to regulate the boiler. Michael from Jackson Heights describes the system used by his larger coop:

“The sensors report to a computer in our basement that trigger the boiler to turn on & off based on the parameters that the user sets up...The hosting of our data is about \$900/year, but through careful monitoring we have dialed back our heat settings and reduced our consumption...we brought our annual gas & oil bill down from about \$40k to about \$25-30/year after we understood what we had purchased and how to use it.”

Check it out online: US Energy Group <http://www.use-group.com>

Victoria from Jackson Heights, who lives in a 10-unit coop, says: *“Our property manager suggested a smart thermostat to replace our existing Heat Timer.” The one-time installation cost is around \$1,000.*

4. Use black-out curtains or tinted window film to keep cool in the summer.

Una, a Sunnyside resident, swears by Gila Glare Control Window Film from Home Depot.

She writes: "It's not advertised for cooling the room, but we noticed the AC not needing to go into energy saver mode so often. Many reviews say the same. Another good thing about this is that it offers privacy when the curtains are open during the day. You can see out, but nobody can see in."

<https://www.homedepot.com/p/Gila-36-in-x-78-in-Gray-Glare-Control-Window-Film-CS78/100007408>

Another option is using **black-out curtains**. Both will reduce the need for air-conditioning.

5. **Change AC filters frequently (once a month is recommended!) to greatly increase energy efficiency.** This can reduce energy consumption by 15%. Also make sure AC's are correctly sized for the room so they are not working too hard, or producing more cold air than is needed; Home Depot can help with this if you buy the AC there.

REUSE AND RECYCLE

1. **Compost.** Folks, it makes a difference. Rotting food releases methane, which as we all know contributes to climate change. Over 20% of the NYC waste stream is food waste. Let's keep it out of the landfills.

Many of you live in coops with composting - that's great! If you're interested in starting one, the Queens Botanical Garden offers support and training. And if your coop or building isn't going to set up composting soon, it's still easy. Contact GROWNYC (<https://www.grownyc.org/compost/locations> for a list of drop-offs.

For Jackson Heights residents: You can drop off food scraps at the Farmers Market on Sunday year-round. Additionally, in the summer and fall, you can drop your compost off every **Thursday** at St. Mark's

Church. There is also another drop off site at 69th Street and 35th Ave under the BQE, open Saturdays 11-1 year-round.

In between, save the scraps in your freezer. Victoria reports: "I use the inner waxy bags from cereal boxes, since they have no other earthly use." Or you can store your food scraps outside the fridge in a container with punched holes and a carbon filter.

You'll find you use will have to take out the garbage MUCH LESS often - an added motivation.

2. Buy less!

Arif writes: *"It takes about 713 gallons of water to produce just one t-shirt." Cotton is one of the most chemical-dependant crops in the world. This is not to mention the environmental pollution that results from dyeing, etc."*

Before you buy something new, ask yourself: Do I need it? Can I get it second-hand? Or can I fix what I already own?

3. Donate goods.

Drop off textiles at the Farmers Market or get a bin for your building. Donate clothes, furniture, shoes, and toys to Hour Children, Salvation Army, or other organizations. **Also consider the Stop & Swaps hosted by Grow NYC.** Bring toys, books, clothes, etc., and just drop them off.

Leontine uses the **Buy Nothing** Jackson Heights facebook group to pass on items that might still be useful to others.

4. Recycle your electronics. LES Ecology Center has a warehouse for dropping off electronics and schedules neighborhood drop-offs throughout the year:

<https://www.lesecologycenter.org/programs/ewaste/>

The city also has e-waste drop-off sites and you can arrange for your coop to get a permanent e-waste bin.

<https://portal.311.nyc.gov/article/?kanumber=KA-02385>

5. Recycle everything you can!

Mandy from Jackson Heights went to a Zero Waste workshop and learned about the company Terracycle. Go to the Terracycle website for how to recycle a variety of products, from Barilla pasta containers to Brita filters.

check <https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/collection-programs>

BE A SMART CONSUMER

1. Buy TP made of recycled paper. American's demand for soft, plushy toilet paper is destroying the Canadian boreal forests.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/01/canada-boreal-forest-toilet-paper-us-climate-change-impact-report>:

The worst brands? Avoid Charmin, Kirkland Signature (Costco's in-house brand), Angel Soft, Quilted Northern, and Up & Up Soft and Strong (Target). Even Trader; Joe's brand got a "D" rating.

What to do? The NRDC offers a toilet paper sustainability scorecard:

<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/shoppers-guide-home-tissue-products>

They suggest buying: Green Forest, 365, Natural Value, Earth First, Seventh Generation, and Trader Joe's. Or you can order from *Who Gives a Crap* or *Tushy*.

Victoria says: *"We started ordering bulk TP from Who Gives a Crap and it's great - we never run out of toilet paper anymore. Go in with a neighbor if you don't think you'll have a place to store all those rolls."*

Also consider investing in cloth napkins. Classy and eco-friendly!

2. Avoid single-use plastic. Consider getting shampoo from Plaine Products, you get an aluminum bottle with a pump and then get refills by mail. Another option is **shampoo bars** which are like soap

bars of shampoo - they don't use plastic packaging and last much longer than a shampoo bottle.

Jasmin from Jackson Heights recommends Lush in Manhattan as a good source of sustainable products. According to Elaine, JH's own Downtown Market sells a great shampoo bar!

3. **Bring reusable bags every time you go shopping.** Once it becomes a habit, it's really easy to remember. Lockwood and other great neighborhood stores have beautiful, queens-themed reusable shopping bags.

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST...REDUCE MEAT CONSUMPTION

Thanks for all your tips! We hope this sheet will inspire you. If it helped you in any way, or if you have tips or stories that might inspire others, email me at: vadler4444@gmail.

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