

## BEYOND RECYCLING

### Earth Day 2020 – Environmentally-Responsible Consumption

When leaving the house, it's so easy and convenient to grab a disposable water bottle. When eating, it seems normal to use a plastic straw and a paper napkin. However, it is these little everyday activities and "normal" functions that can easily be changed to reduce our environmental impact. Activities and functions noted above, can be seen as mindless consumption habits and can be fixed with only a few minor changes. Here, you'll find a few tips and tricks leading to responsible consumption of energy, reusable and disposable products, water, and vehicle usage.

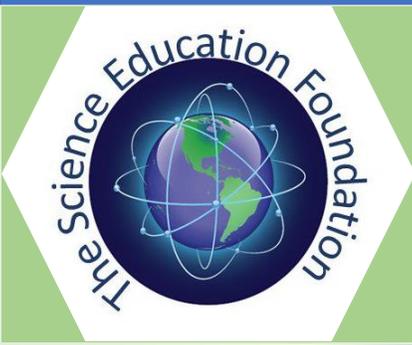
#### **Energy Consumption**

Being a smart energy consumer doesn't take a lot of effort. With a little bit of thought, the next home power bill received will be lower than ever!

- ✓ Start by simply turning off the computer after use and checking to make sure the home is equipped with LED light bulbs for premier performance and efficiency ("Top 5 Steps to Reduce Your Energy Consumption").
- ✓ Make sure that the home has been insulated and that any cracks or crevasses are sealed, especially around doorways and windows. This will help to lock in that hot or cool air.
- ✓ Don't heat/cool a house when nobody is around to enjoy it. Turn the thermostat down before leaving for work and wait until arriving back home to turn up the heat! (Dykman, paras. 9,18).
- ✓ Finally, make sure that the home appliances being used are energy efficient. When the task presents itself, air dry clothes to save the extra energy ("31 Ways to Save Energy in Your Home").

#### **Disposal vs. Reusable Product Use**

Responsible consumption doesn't only come into play with energy. Responsible consumption also plays a huge factor when making the switch from using one-use disposable products such as plastic water bottles and straws to reusable products. Instead of reaching for that one-use plastic bottle, invest in a metal or reusable plastic drinking bottle.



# BEYOND RECYCLING

## Earth Day 2020 – Environmentally-Responsible Consumption

Another option would be to buy a reusable metal straw instead of the little plastic ones. Remember those pesky plastic bags from the grocery store? Choose something a little better next time by using paper or reusable cotton/canvas shopping bags. Author Beth Buczynski in her article, "17 Cheap and Awesome Reusable Replacements for Disposable Products," also mentions using glass instead of plastic containers, washable napkins, and reusable coffee filters. But the solutions to becoming a responsible consumer don't end there!

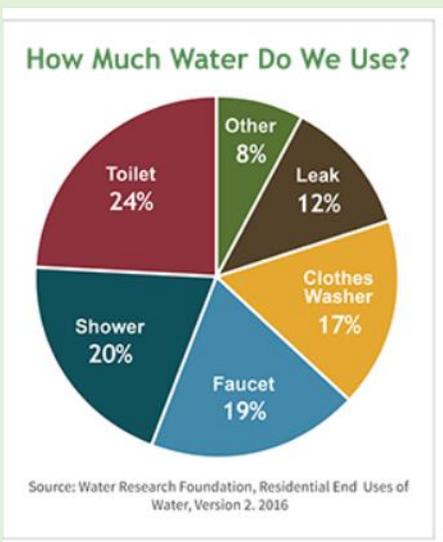
The energy it takes to make 1.5 million tons of plastic could power 250,000 homes.

Each person living in the U.S consumes roughly two trees annually in paper products.

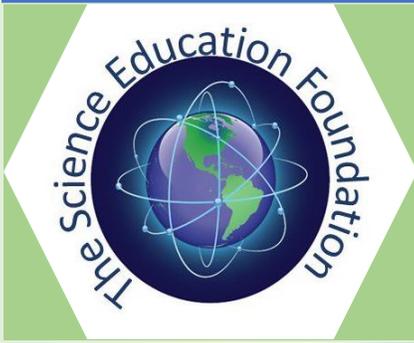
### Water Consumption

The over-consumption of water is also a very serious issue. According to the USGS, water use in the United States in 2015 was estimated to be about 332 billion gallons per day. Thousands upon thousands of gallons of water are wasted every day. The average American family uses more than 300 gallons of water per day at home. In order to combat this, try some of these easy solutions:

- ✓ Don't let the water run while brushing your teeth or washing your hands
- ✓ Take shorter showers
- ✓ Only water the lawn as much as needed.



The United States Environmental Protection Agency also recommends fixing pipe leaks, taking showers instead of baths, and only starting the dishwasher and laundry when there is a full load to be done.



## BEYOND RECYCLING

### Earth Day 2020 – Environmentally-Responsible Consumption

#### **Transportation Options**

Individuals can also be responsible consumers when it comes to vehicles and selection of transportation options. For some people, their car is their most prized possession. For others, it's simply just a mode of getting from one place to another. Either way, people at both ends of the spectrum can make efforts to do better. In an article titled, "Five Ways to Reduce Your Household's Energy Use," author Andy Kollmorgen tells readers to walk or bike to near places instead of driving a car. He also mentions taking public transportation or carpooling. And if driving is necessary, choose a car with high fuel efficiency.

All in all, making the transition from a mindless consumer to a responsible consumer may be a tough change for some and it may take time; however, these suggestions cannot only save people money, but also help long-term in saving the planet.

#### **References:**

<https://www.choice.com.au/home-improvement/energy-saving/reducing-your-carbon-footprint/articles/five-ways-to-reduce-your-households-energy-use> , accessed January 30, 2020.

<https://green.harvard.edu/tools-resources/poster/top-5-steps-reduce-your-energy-consumption> , accessed January 30, 2020.

<https://www.wisebread.com/17-cheap-and-awesome-reusable-replacements-for-disposable-products>, accessed January 30, 2020.

<https://www.epa.gov/watersense/start-saving> , accessed January 30, 2020.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/moneybuilder/2011/08/23/10-easy-ways-to-lower-your-electric-bill/#51c7dba16536> , accessed January 30, 2020.

<https://blog.constellation.com/2016/01/01/31-ways-to-save-energy-in-your-home/> , accessed January 30, 2020.

<https://www.rubiconglobal.com/blog/statistics-trash-recycling/> , accessed February 5, 2020.