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Did you know that you can actually make your own solar panels?

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This clever device has 3 US Patents - Watch this short video and see how over 900 homeowners are using it to produce their own electricity at home... and see how easily you can join them.

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We hear and read about it everyday about our changing world and how this impacts on our planet. Climate change, pollution, animal extinction, amongst many other issues threaten our planet every second of every day. But what can you and I do about it? What difference can one person make on the very grand scheme of things? In fact, by making just a few simple changes to our lives, can make a huge impact on the environment that we live that can be carried on for generations to come.

There is a deluge of information in books, publications and on the internet on how we can live more greener lives and save money. This booklet aims to bring together some of the more useful ideas, that can be used around the home, at the shops, in the garden, at work in the office, travelling and in other areas of your life.

Top tips for being ...greener in the home

- Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth and save 10,000 litres of water a year!
- Have a shower instead of a bath. It's better for your circulation *and* for the planet. Try and take less time in the shower also. Not only can you save money from your bill, but by trimming off 2-3 minutes of your shower each day, you can save 150 gallons of water per month! Consider getting a low flow shower head.
- Banish plastic bottles of water and invest in a water filter to purify tap water.
- Don't overheat your home. Install a thermostat to maintain a temperature of 16°C in bedrooms and 19°C in other rooms. Lowering the temperature of your home by just 1°C could save you 7% on your electricity bill. Put more clothes on before turning you heat up!
- Put radiator panels behind your radiator to reflect the heat back into the room. You could save 5-10% off your fuel bills this way.
- Try using ceiling fans instead of air conditioning. To keep cool, use a dehumidifier, close drapes during the day and open windows at night.
- Replace ordinary light bulbs with high-efficiency ones. They may be more expensive but last 12 times longer and use 5 times less electricity.
- Turn off your TV, Hi-fi, PC and DVD player - they still use electricity when not in use. Even while on standby, they consume 10% more electricity.
- Switch the lights off when you leave the room!
- Defrost your freezer. A coat of 4 millimetres of ice can double its consumption of electricity.
- When washing your clothes, switch to phosphate-free washing powder and never run a machine half empty. Try to reduce the temperature of the wash also where you can and choose a shorter cycle.

- Wash dishes by hand (it uses significantly less water than a dishwasher) and dispose of water outside to water the garden. If you do use a dishwasher, only switch on when it is completely full and use a shorter cycle.
- Fix a small device to your loo that reduces the amount used for each flush. Each time your toilet is flushed, it uses 5-7 gallons of water. Toilets use one third of the water used in most homes.
- Wash your car less often.
- Fix all the leaks around your home.
- Think before you throw anything away. If you can, re-use anything you can. If you cannot re-use, then recycle or compost. Use your council's service if there is one, or check out www.recyclenow.com to find where you can take your waste to be recycled if you do not already get curb-side collections.
- Give away clothes, books, CDs that you no longer want to a charity shop. Have a good spring clean of your wardrobe and drawers. Be as ruthless as you can and donate those clothes that you have not worn in years – someone else could get many years out of your unwanted items. Alternatively, a good way of making some money from items that you no longer want is by doing a car boot or garage sale, or even sell your items on an online marketplace site. You can even buy items that others no longer want or need, often more cheaply and which is less of a cost to the environment.
- Recycle electricals. If they are still in working order, consider donating to a local charity if they are happy to accept them. If not, dispose of responsibly. Check you local council's website for details on this, or if you need more advice, contact your local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre on 0800 512012.
- Dispose of old paint, chemicals, and oil properly. Don't put batteries, antifreeze, paint, motor oil, or chemicals in the rubbish bin. Use proper toxics disposal sites. Never buy more than you need.
- **Did you know that each year millions of trees and billions of gallons of water are used to create junk mail, most of which never gets recycled?** There are several things you can do to reduce how much junk mail you receive:
 - Arrange to take your details off national mailing lists. Register with the free Mailing Preference Service by visiting: www.mpsonline.org.uk
 - Everytime you subscribe to a magazine or buy something from a catalogue or online store, request that your address to be not added to any third party mailing lists.
 - When you receive unwanted mail from a company, call them and ask that you should be removed from their mailing list.

- Any junk mail that you receive, remember to recycle it or use as scrap paper if you can.
- Make your home more energy efficient. This will save you a lot of money. Seal up windows, gaps around air conditioners, and other cracks with some inexpensive products found at most hardware stores. Unroll "rope" caulk (made of putty and sold in a long coil) and press it into the gaps, or apply heat-shrinkable plastic sheeting to your gaps with double-sided tape and shrink it to fit with a hair dryer. Other simple tips include leaving open your curtains or drapes on south-facing windows during the day to let sunlight in – while leaving other draperies closed as much as possible, cleaning your air filters every month, closing vents in and doors to unused rooms, and getting a check-up on your heating equipment. Also, make sure your water heater is insulated - many hardware stores sell insulation kits quite cheaply.
- Check that your attic is well ventilated and well insulated. This is the key to keeping your home warm in winter and cool in summer.
- Switch off your mobile phone charger when it has finished charging. If you don't it will keep drawing almost as much energy as when charging and you will generate 35-70 kg of avoidable CO₂ each year. In fact, 95% of the energy used by mobile phone chargers in the UK is wasted energy.
- Buy rechargeable batteries. If you do buy ordinary batteries, recycle them. Some shops advertise a service where you can leave your old batteries to be recycled. Alternatively, have a look at your local council's website for details on their recycling procedures.
- **Did you know cleaning your home can be harmful to your health?** Many common household cleaners contain toxic solvents, fragrances, disinfectants, and other ingredients that can pollute the air and cause respiratory, skin, and other reactions. Try to buy greener / vegetable based cleaning products (supermarkets have a wide range of them now). You can even make your own – which is cheaper still! There is plenty of online information on this to help you get started.

Top tips for being **greener...at the shops**

- Use re-useable shopping bags, canvas bags, boxes, etc. when you go to the supermarket; instead of plastic bags that can take 400 years to degrade. Refuse a bag if you do not really need one.
- Choose seasonal and local products to reduce pollution produced from transporting exotic goods from faraway shores. Shop at farmers markets to support local farm businesses.
- Keep the original containers of products such as washing up liquid, shower gel and fill them up with handy refills that are now readily available.

- Buy products with less packaging and check that the packaging can be recycled.
- Buy re-useable / washable nappies if you can. A disposable nappy takes 300 years to disintegrate and one baby gets through 5000 disposable nappies in his or hers early years. If you struggle to do this completely, just use the disposable nappies for when you are out and about. Also, use moistened cotton wool on your baby's bum rather than wipes. Not only is cotton wool kinder for your baby's skin, but also cheaper also. Again, just keep a spare pack of wipes if you want to for convenience when you are away from home.
- Try to shop ethically. Its now much easier to find products that are ethically sourced, fair trade, recycled or biodegradable.
- Only buy seafood when you know it has been caught sustainably.
- Try growing some of your own food. You do not need a big garden to do this, or any garden at all. You can grow a variety of fruits and vegetables in window boxes and pots.
- Avoiding buying bottled water and instead using a reusable water bottle. It takes millions of gallons of water to produce the plastic for single-use water bottles, and millions more to purify the water that goes into them.

Top tips for being greener...at work in the office

- Encourage your company to go green by using heating and air conditioning reasonably, recycling paper and working with suppliers who have sustainable development policies. Donate old appliances e.g. PCs, photocopiers, printers etc, as well as old furniture.
- Print off only what is absolutely necessary and recycle paper by using both sides.
- Before printing documents, click on 'print preview' to ensure you are printing what you want and need.
- Draft quality printouts use less toner. Select 'draft' printouts when using the 'Print' command on your computer – this is usually changed under Printer Options on the Windows Print Dialog box. You can even set your printer to make draft prints by default.
- Read documents where you can rather than printing them.
- Encourage staff to share and circulate copies of reports rather than issuing separate copies.
- Set up recycling bins in your office for paper / cardboard / plastics, etc..
- Use scrap paper for taking notes, rather than using new sheets of paper.
- Get each member of staff to bring their own mug to work instead of using wasteful plastic cups every day. Ask colleagues to bring any spare mugs and cups from home so that visitors can use them.

- Turn off your screen saver. Instead, turn off your monitor when you're not using it. The next best idea is to use your computer's power management feature to automatically shut the monitor down when it is not in use.
- Despite the rumours, leaving your computer on overnight is in fact less efficient than shutting it down and booting it up the next day. Turning off your computer will decrease the amount of energy it uses, will reduce its mechanical stress and prolong its life.
- Walk up and down the stairs – don't take the lift. This will save on energy and will get you fitter into the bargain!
- Turn off your computer at the plug when you leave for the night - also any other equipment that goes into stand-by mode when not in use.
- Ask your Caretaker / Estate Manager to change the thermostat on the heating or air conditioning in your office.
- Use blinds to reduce solar gain in summer and save on air conditioning costs.
- Don't fill the kettle to make a single cup of tea or coffee. Just put in the amount of water you need.
- Share stationary
- Encourage staff to car share if possible to and from work and if there is a meeting off the premises that several people are attending, suggest that you can all travel in one or two vehicles instead.
- Donate old pcs / laptops / furniture to a local charity if they are still in good working order.

Top tips for being greener...whilst travelling

- Take the train or a coach for longer trips, if possible instead of the car. Use the bus where you can also.
- Walk where you can for shorter distances. Walking is good for your health, pocket and for the planet!
- Consider biking or walking to work once a week.
- Car pool with colleagues, friends, parents. The school run alone adds up to a billion petrol-burning miles a year. Most cars only currently take 1 or 2 passengers, which equals a lot of pollution for a half-full car.
- If you are pulling over in your vehicle for more than 20 seconds, it's worth stopping the engine. This will save you money and help the planet too. Similarly, if you are stuck in traffic and have not moved for 2-3 minutes, turn your engine off.
- Keep your car in good running condition. That means getting regular oil changes so you'll produce fewer emissions and making sure tires are properly inflated so you'll use less fuel.
- If it's time to replace your car, make fuel efficiency a key criterion. The most fuel-efficient vehicles on the market are small, lightweight cars and gasoline-electric hybrids. If your old car is running well, keep it

tuned up; it may be easier on the earth's resources than manufacturing a new car.

- When using your vehicle, try to combine errands that you run and plan your route so that you are making the most of not only your time and expenses, but your fuel emissions also.

Top tips for being greener...in the garden

- Plant native or drought-tolerant garden plants.
- Let your grass grow longer before mowing.
- Don't use pesticides/herbicides on your lawn -
Along with nitrogen fertilizer runoff, these are major water pollutants. Instead of using pesticides, attract beneficial insects to your garden by planting nectar and pollen sources; such as basil, dill, and alyssum. Use a strong spray of water to wash away aphids and mites, and use sticky traps for whiteflies. For serious infestations use insecticidal soap or horticultural oil. To rid your garden of slugs, encircle your plants with crushed eggshells.
- Try 'grass-cycling'! This is the natural practice of leaving clippings on the lawn when mowing. These clippings quickly decompose and return nutrients to the soil. Cut your grass when it is dry and free of leaves. Mow often enough so that no more than one-third of the length of the grass blade is cut. This allows grass clippings to fall easily through the grass to the soil. This process reduces the need for fertilizers and eliminates much of the waste entering our landfills.
- Use rotting leaves in your garden instead of peat moss. It's better to leave the peat in bogs, where it's helping the environment.
- Make a wildlife friendly garden. The basic elements are: plants that create food for the animals (such as nectar and berries for butterflies and birds), nuts for the birds, a reliable water supply, shelter from predators and the weather, as well as places for animals rear their young, and the absence of pesticides and other harmful chemicals.
- Water your lawn only in the morning or evening. (Water evaporates four to eight times faster during the heat of the day.)
- Install a rain barrel to capture rain from your downspout. You can use this water to wash your car or water your garden.

Other top tips for being greener...

- Use hand dryers instead of paper towels to dry your hands within public toilets if they have them. Even though the electricity that powers electric dryers generates greenhouse gases, the production of paper towels is twice as energy intensive and creates more greenhouse gases, not to mention landfill, overall.
- Don't take the planet to the cleaners! **Did you know dry cleaning is a hazardous process that uses toxic chemicals and poisons the**

environment, our clothing, and us? Many dry cleaners use a solvent called perchloroethylene, or perc. Perc and other solvents are placed in a rotating cleaning drum along with clothing. The drum spins out the majority of the solvent, and hot air evaporates the remaining fluid before the garment is pressed and bagged. These solvents remove soils and stains without damaging fabrics. However, they can make us sick. Perc has been linked to cancer, liver and nervous system damage, infertility, and hormonal disruption. Residues of these toxins can remain in the fibers of dry cleaned garments; especially when clothes are placed in a plastic bag soon after processing is completed. For this reason, it's recommended that you remove the plastic bag and air your garment out for several days in a safe, isolated, and well ventilated location to let these residues evaporate. It is better and safer not to dry clean at all. In fact, many "dry clean only" garments can be hand-washed and air dried or machine-washed using the gentle cycle and a mild detergent.

- Dispose of cigarettes butts properly. **Did you know it takes ten years for one cigarette butt to degrade?** Most people wouldn't throw a gum wrapper on the ground, but cigarette butts are commonly dropped or tossed out of car windows. Cigarette butts are not only litter, but they also cause many serious environmental problems. Many land and marine animals die annually from mistakenly eating cigarette butts. Cigarettes tossed out of car windows are often the cause of forest fires worldwide.
- To save any of the trouble of the above - quit smoking! Second-hand smoke is a major indoor air pollutant and health hazard. When you quit, both you and your family will lead longer and healthier lives.
- Consider the environmental costs of major decisions and purchases. When relocating or changing jobs try to live close to work. Compare efficiency when purchasing new cars or appliances. Buy fewer things. Choose products with lower energy inputs.
- Volunteer/Lobby for the Environment. Work locally and globally to save natural places, reduce urban sprawl, lower pollution and prevent the destruction of wilderness areas for timber and oil.
- Plant a tree with a child. Take a walk in the woods, or plant trees, which store CO₂. Teaching our children to love and care for the planet is the most important thing we can do to insure the future of humankind.

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