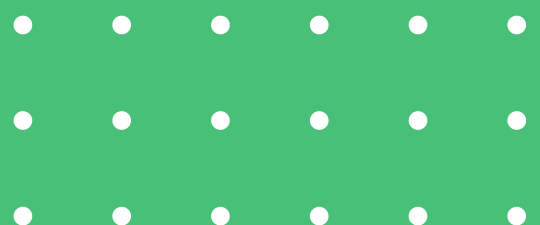


Eco-Friendly Habits for a Healthier Home



Jack Thompson

University of Sydney



Abstract

A healthy home doesn't have to come at the cost of the environment. Many of the choices we make each day from the products we use to how we manage waste can have a big impact on our health and the planet. This guide explores simple, eco-conscious habits that support a cleaner, safer, and more sustainable living space. Whether you're just beginning your journey or looking to improve your current routines, this document offers practical ideas, natural alternatives, and thoughtful approaches to home life. Along the way, you'll discover how small changes can lead to lasting benefits for you, your family, and the environment.

Getting Started

Making your home more eco-friendly doesn't mean you need to throw everything out or change your lifestyle overnight. It starts with awareness understanding which everyday habits may be doing more harm than good, and exploring healthier, more sustainable options. This guide will walk you through a range of topics, from rethinking the products you use, to saving energy and reducing waste.

You'll learn how natural solutions like soda crystals can replace harsh chemicals, how to reduce plastic waste in everyday tasks, and how to make decisions that benefit both your well-being and the world around you. Start small, stay curious, and let these simple steps guide you toward a healthier, more sustainable home.

Rethinking Everyday Products



- Limit your use of single-use and disposable products and choose alternatives which can be used again.
- Opt for products with minimal packaging where possible.
- Refuse plastic bags when you don't need them. Keep reusable bags handy so you remember to take them to the shops. You can also use boxes or your own shopping trolley bag or backpack.
- When buying fruit and vegetables, put them into your trolley rather than plastic bags.
- If you don't read advertising mail, put a sign on your letterbox.
- When building or renovating, build only what you need and think carefully about your design. Choose durable materials and finishes as they should last longer.

Repairing household items instead of replacing them can be a great way to reduce waste and save money.

There are many ways to reuse household items:

- Give unwanted clothes, household items, furniture or appliances to family or friends, or donate them to charities. Freecycle and other online groups help communities give away unwanted items.
- If purchasing something, try to find it second-hand or buy items containing recycled content.
- Use washed takeaway containers as stackable containers for frozen food.
- Use glass jars to store food or other items, or pass them on to friends or groups who make jams.
- Use small plastic bags to wrap wet and smelly rubbish or to pick up after your pet.
- If building or renovating, consider using recycled materials such as windows or floorboards—you can save money and add character at the same time.
- Putting the wrong materials in your recycling bin may lead to large amounts of recyclable material being sent to landfill because it's too difficult to separate them out.
- It's dangerous to put hazardous waste like batteries, motor oil, chemicals, paints, and used lighting products containing mercury including compact fluorescent lamps in kerbside recycling.
- Find out what drop-off and recycling facilities are available in your local area. Contact your local council. They may collect other items for recycling, including mobile phones and printer cartridges.
- Contact your local council to find out what e-waste recycling services they offer for larger electronic and electrical products.
- Check with your local council for safe ways to dispose of hazardous household waste as it can't go in your normal garbage.
- Recycle unwanted plastic bags or soft plastics including pasta and rice bags, shopping bags, net bags, cling and bubble wrap at most major supermarkets.
- Roll aluminium foil into a ball and place it in a recycling bin, even if it has food stuck to it.
- Compost your organic waste.

Types of household waste



Organic waste

In 2018-19, 15.3 Mt of organic waste were generated in Australia. Households were the largest contributor, supplying 42% of all organic waste (6.4 Mt) (ABS).

When organic waste decomposes in landfills, it produces landfill gas which consists of about 55% methane. Methane is a much more damaging greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide (CO₂). It's also foul-smelling and highly flammable.

Organic material sent to landfill would be better composted at home or dropped at a local green waste recycler. Check with your local council or Planet Ark's Recycling Near You to find out about organic waste facilities in your area.

Paper

When buying paper or cardboard products, look out for items that contain a high percentage of Australian recycled fibre or are made with fibre content from sustainably managed sources, such as plantations or sustainably managed native forests. Australian paper manufacturers have to meet environmental production standards which may not have to be met in other countries.

Paper and cardboard can be left for kerbside recycling.

Plastics

More than 2.5 Mt of plastic were consumed in Australia in 2018-19. Only 9% of this was sent for recycling, while 84% went to landfill (ABS).

Plastics are man-made products that come from valuable non-renewable resources like oil, gas and coal. Plastic has been the most common item collected on 'Clean Up Australia day' for over 20 years.

Hard plastics can generally be recycled through kerbside recycling programs, where they are then melted, stretched, cut and moulded into a recycled product.

Some supermarkets now offer a drop-off point for recycling soft plastics including shopping bags, cling and bubble wrap, pasta and rice bags, and biscuit packets.

Packaging

Packaging makes up a significant part of the rubbish in landfill. Buying in bulk can save you money, packaging and transport costs. If not, try to choose products that use less packaging.

Remember to take re-usable bags out with you to avoid the need for single-use plastic bags.

Aluminium and steel

Aluminium is a common metal and is used widely in cans (including aerosol) and for food-related products like foil and pie trays.

Producing aluminium uses so much energy that the metal is sometimes called 'frozen electricity'. However, aluminium can be easily recycled, and many times over. Even aluminium with food scraps stuck to it can be recycled.

When recycling steel cans, it's best to put the lid inside the can and then squash the top of the can before placing it in your recycling bin.

Choosing Natural Alternatives for Everyday Use



Choosing eco-friendly materials reduces waste and lowers environmental impact. That's why many industries now prioritize sustainable options to protect natural resources. From plant-based fibers to recycled materials, innovative solutions replace harmful alternatives. Understanding these materials helps us make better choices for everyday products.

What Makes a Material Eco-Friendly?

The materials that are eco-friendly come from renewable, sustainable, or recycled resources. They minimize waste, reduce pollutant emissions, as well as have little environmental impact. Natural fibers such as bamboo, hemp, and organic cotton can grow rapidly without destroying resources. Recycling materials, like cork or recycled plastic, can help reduce garbage that goes to landfill.

Natural cleaning products have revolutionised household cleaning by promoting safety, sustainability and prowess. Made from non-toxic and plant-based ingredients, they effectively tackle dirt, grime and gunk while protecting indoor air quality and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

White vinegar, baking soda, lemon and hydrogen peroxide are some of the most popular alternatives to store-bought traditional cleaning products. However, one of the trendiest products gaining popularity in the green cleaning sector is soda crystals (washing soda).

It is an enzyme and bleach-free water softener and versatile multi-purpose cleaner, ideal for household cleaning. Despite cleaning dirty laundry, these white crystals can do wonders in dislodging dirt, grease, gunk, and grime from almost all surfaces.

However, most people confuse soda crystals with baking soda and use them interchangeably. Both may appear similar and alkaline in nature, but they have different compositions and uses. Baking soda is mild and used for neutralising bad smells and killing common household germs, while soda crystals are strong and used for extra stubborn stains and grime. You need to be extra careful when using crystals for household cleaning.

Here is a list of 5 clever ways to use soda crystals for cleaning chores. Many professionals also use this product to deliver professional end of lease cleaning Sydney results without using VOCs and other hazardous products. Ensure you always dilute it with warm water for better outcomes.

1. Unclog Blocked Drains and Pipes

If the duo of baking soda and vinegar isn't cutting through gunk and grease from clogged drains, use the power of sodium carbonate. It is good to pour one cup of soda crystals down the kitchen, bathroom sink and shower waste pipes.

Leave it for a few minutes and flush it using hot water. The crystals can break down the greasy residue and unclog the drains. Flush it again using hot water.

2. Tackle Stubborn Carpet Stains

Due to regular wear and tear, delicate floor coverings tend to accumulate dust bunnies, pet dander, pollen, grime, and other allergens. However, it may lose its pristine glory due to accidental spills, splatters and pet stains.

To retrieve the shine of your carpets, mix 100 grams of soda crystals with 1 cup of warm water and apply it to the affected area. Gently blot the area with a clean cloth and leave it for a few minutes before blotting the surface again with a clean cloth. It can effectively remove wine stains, coffee stains, ink parts and pet pee stains without causing any damage to your carpet and rug.

Note: Always check the care label before applying any product to your plush carpets. Spot test the solvent on a hidden area to prevent discolouration.

3. Tackle Smelly Washing Machine



Low-temperature laundry washes can harbour common bacteria and mould in your washing machine if not cleaned regularly. This can also cause an unpleasant smell and affect the overall performance.

Run a hot wash with 500g of soda crystals to banish germs and bad odours. Add it to the detergent dispenser and run the cycle. You can also use vinegar to dislodge stains and grime without causing any damage.

4. De-Grease Oven Racks and Shelves

There is no denying that the oven is one of the most overlooked things when sprucing up a kitchen. That's one of the reasons why most tenants lose their deposited security during the end of a tenancy. Whether preparing for a house party or wanting to impress your fussy landlord, ensure you deep clean the oven inside and outside, including grease-laden racks/shelves. These tend to collect food splatters, oil stains, and buildup grease that are hard to remove in the dishwasher.

Well, you can try another effective method, i.e., submerging greasy racks in soapy water. Fill a large container with hot water, a few drops of dishwashing liquid soap and 250g of soda crystals. Soak the racks for an hour. Meanwhile, remove gunk and grease from your oven. Next, scrub the racks using a sponge or brush. You can also clean marble countertops using this magical product and create a spotless home.

However, if you are at the end of your tenancy, prefer hiring experts for a thorough end of lease cleaning Sydney. They leave no signs of dirt and gunk behind, helping you secure the full bond amount.

5. Restore the Shine of Chopping Board

Transform your dull and dingy chopping board with soda crystals. Add a few drops of warm water and a tablespoon of soda crystals to prepare a thick paste. Pour it gently on the surface and gently scrub the surface to remove stains and grime. It can effectively clean your chopping board while banishing bad odours. To disinfect the surface, rub a sliced lemon and kill germs and bacteria.

Reducing Single Use Plastics and Packaging Waste



Transitioning to a completely plastic-free lifestyle overnight would be a challenging feat for most of us! But what if we each took a small step each day towards reducing our plastic footprint? We could take a week to make a real effort to actively seek alternatives, reduce unnecessary plastics and make sustainable swaps.

Here's seven simple yet effective steps you could take next week to minimise plastic in your daily life, and make a positive impact on the environment.

DAY ONE

Carry Reusable Shopping Bags: Plastic bags are one of the most common single-use plastic items. Get into the habit of carrying reusable shopping bags wherever you go. Keep a few sturdy, foldable bags in your car or by the front door so that you're always prepared.

DAY TWO

Say No to Disposable Water Bottles: Incredibly, Australia is home to the world's most expensive bottled water, and we have the second highest consumption rate per capita! Although most Australians can access extremely good, safe drinking water straight from the tap, on average, each Australian spent about \$580 on bottled water in 2021, making it one of the most common and expensive single-use purchases in the country. Invest in a reusable water bottle and carry it with you wherever you go.

DAY THREE

BYO Reusables! One of the most effective ways to reduce plastic is by replacing single-use items with reusable alternatives. Plastic straws, utensils, and takeaway containers – especially coffee cups - contribute significantly to plastic pollution. Thanks to that thin plastic lining that makes them waterproof, most coffee cups can't be efficiently processed in paper recycling mills, so the majority are incinerated or sent to landfill. And when people erroneously place coffee cups into recycling bins, it can contaminate the higher value plastic that can be recycled; often meaning the whole load has to go to landfill. It's estimated that up to 90% of single-use hot beverage cups end up in landfill - equating to around 60,000 kg of plastic per annum.

DAY FOUR

Opt for Plastic-Free Packaging: When grocery shopping, be mindful of the packaging materials used for your products. Choose to refuse pre-packaged meat, fish and deli products, particularly those sold on polystyrene trays. Buy loose fresh produce and look for items with minimal or no plastic packaging and keep an eye out for the Australasian Recycling Label which tells you how to correctly dispose of each part of the packaging.

DAY FIVE

Choose Non-Plastic Food Storage: Consider using glass containers, stainless steel lunchboxes, and beeswax wraps for storing and packing food. A popular solution is

the tried and tested upside down plate on a bowl and many people find reusable silicone bowl toppers to cover food in bowls, pots and pans a useful option. Similarly, opt for glass or stainless-steel containers for leftovers and lunches instead of single-use plastic containers.

DAY SIX

Choose Plastic-Free Personal Care Products: Keep an eye out for plastic-free alternatives in the form of bamboo toothbrushes, shampoo bars, and safety razors. Or at least make sure the plastic bottles you buy are made from recycled not virgin plastic, and are able to be recycled. There are many reusable alternatives to single-use sanitary items, including menstrual cups, period underwear and washable cotton pads and liners.

DAY SEVEN

Spread Awareness: Last but not least, spread awareness about the harmful effects of plastic pollution and encourage others to join you in reducing waste. We don't need a handful of Aussies doing zero waste perfectly; we need millions of Aussies doing it imperfectly! Together, we can create a collective impact and inspire positive change on a larger scale. Every small action counts, and thousands of small steps make a big difference - together we can all be part of the solution.

Improving Air Quality Through Greener Habits



Understanding indoor air quality

Most of us spend a large percentage of our lives indoors, so it is worth thinking about air quality in our homes. Poor indoor air quality may produce a range of health effects, from mild and generally non-specific symptoms such as headaches,

tiredness or lethargy, to more severe effects such as sensitisation to allergens and aggravation of asthma and allergic responses. Poor indoor air quality in your home may exacerbate pre-existing conditions or cause new health issues.

Whether a source of air pollutants causes an indoor air quality problem or not depends on:

- the type of air pollutant
- the amount and rate at which it is released from its source
- the degree of ventilation available in the home to remove it from indoors
- the leakiness of your home, if the pollution source is outside
- the sensitivity of the person and any pre-existing conditions.

Some groups of people in the community are more vulnerable to pollutants than others, or are likely to spend more time indoors than the general population. These people include:

- the very young
- the very old
- those with pre-existing respiratory or cardiovascular disease
- those who are sensitised to specific substances.

Generally, the greater the amount of pollutant (exposure), the greater the health impact. The duration of exposure is also important – if low-level exposure occurs over a long period of time (perhaps many years) the total dose may be large.

What you do in the home can make a significant difference to the health of the indoor environment. For example, smoking, and poor cleaning procedures can add to air pollutants.

Achieving better indoor air quality



There are 5 key aspects to achieving better indoor air quality:

- Prevent — Do not allow potentially harmful products into the home.
- Eliminate — Identify the source of air problems and wherever possible eliminate them through better product selection and design.
- Ventilate — Ventilate the home to remove pollutants before they accumulate to levels that can pose health and comfort problems.
- Separate — Separate problem materials from occupants by using air barriers or sealers such as coatings.
- Absorb — Indoor plants can be used to improve the quality of the indoor environment, as well as to add beauty.

Planning and design

If you are building a new home, thinking about air quality during the planning and design phases will help to achieve good air quality in your new home, without the need for expensive refits.

If you are renovating an existing home, consider what effects renovations may have on air quality. The materials used in some old homes, as well as the activities associated with renovation, can increase the health risks for renovators and anyone else in the home during the work. Assess the risks, including signs of dampness, and manage them through safe work practices and clean-up. It is a good idea to get a building inspection report done by a professional.

The site

You should consider what substances are likely to be in and around the site for your home.

The land on which you intend to build (or have built) may have chemical residues from previous industrial or agricultural processes. Talk to local long-term residents about the land's former use. Visit the planning section of your local government. Get advice about legal searches that might show how the land was used.

Check how emissions from existing or future industries might affect your home. The closeness of a main road, bus depot, airport, orchard, or industrial plant can affect the amount of airborne pollutants entering your home. Check with your local council about future land use in your area. The National Pollutant Inventory is a database of national information on pollutant emissions and their sources.

If you have hay fever or asthma, find out whether local plant species will cause problems when they flower. Ask a local plant specialist about the main local vegetation types within a kilometre of your new home.

You should also consider how air will move around the site. Local topography, proximity of trees and nearness to water all influence air temperatures and wind patterns around your home. A home on top of an exposed hill will be affected

differently to the same home in a deep valley or on an urban block with houses nearby. Design to enhance natural ventilation and shelter in a way that takes account of your home's specific location refer to Choosing and using a site for more information.

Ventilation and airtightness

Strike a balance between the need to introduce fresh air, maintain comfortable room temperatures and conserve energy – the ideal design strategy will depend on your climate.

Good design and orientation can encourage breezes and convection currents to draw stale air out and fresher air into your home. If windows are closed for security or noise reasons, fixed wall vents can be installed to ensure adequate ventilation. You can also consider installing security products that allow you to feel secure but also allow you to regulate the air flow between indoors and out. Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery is a way to ensure reliable ventilation and maintain high levels of energy efficiency.

Conserving Energy and Water at Home



As power prices rise, many of us are looking for ways to use less energy at home.

The good news is there are many simple, no-cost things you can do right now. By trying some of these ideas and making a few changes to everyday habits, you could save money and help the environment without sacrificing comfort.

Minimising hot water use

Hot water is responsible for around 25% of the average household energy bill. Ways to reduce this include:

- washing clothes in cold water and waiting until there is a full load
- only running the dishwasher when it's full and on energy-saving mode
- fitting a low-flow showerhead (it will pay for itself in no time)
- keeping showers short.

Choosing efficient appliances

Household appliances can account for up to one third of your energy bill.

If you're buying a new fridge, freezer, television, washing machine, clothes dryer, dishwasher or air-conditioner, look for the Energy Rating Label.

High star-rated models can cost a little more, but choosing a cheaper less energy-efficient product could end up costing more in the long run. This is because running costs over the product's lifetime can add up to more than any savings made on the original purchase price.

Using appliances wisely

'Standby power' used by products like microwaves, televisions and gaming consoles can account for 10% of your electricity bill. If it's got a little light or clock, it's using power.

Running costs can be reduced by:

- turning off appliances at the wall when they are not in use
- getting rid of any additional fridges and freezers that are not needed
- drying clothes on the line rather than the dryer
- using a timer or setting up specific times for appliances to run to avoid unnecessary energy use.

Heating and cooling efficiently

For each degree heating or cooling is increased, energy use will increase by about 5% to 10%.

To keep your bills in control, think about setting your heating thermostat to 18 to 20°C in winter and to 25 to 27°C in summer.

You can make the most of the energy you're using by closing internal doors and only heating or cooling the rooms you're using.

Switch off your heater and air conditioner before you leave the house or go to bed.

Draught-proofing your home

Draught-proofing is a cheap and easy way to keep your home comfortable and save up to a quarter of your heating and cooling costs.

Sealing gaps around doors, floors, windows and skirting boards, and using a sand-filled or fabric 'sausage' draught-stopper are 'do-it-yourself' options.

Water saving tips for inside the home

Keep showers to 4 minutes or less

Estimated water savings: 43 L/day

Inside the home, we tend to use most of our water in the shower - with average shower water usage accounting for 24% of total water used in the home. The average shower time is around 6 minutes, so cutting your shower time by just 2 minutes can make a big difference in your water usage.

Try using a shower timer or listen to a 4-minute song from our waterwise shower playlist. And if you're waiting for the water to heat up, why not collect the cold water in a bucket to water your garden. Find more ways to save water during shower time.

Pay attention to leaky toilets

Estimated water savings: 25 L/day

A trickle in the toilet can waste around 9,000L of water a year. Look for signs that your toilet is leaking. And remember to choose the half flush where possible and only flush the 3 P's - pee, poo and (toilet) paper.

Turn off the tap while you brush your teeth

Estimated water savings: 10 L/minute

Every minute you leave the tap running wastes up to 10L of water. 8 out of 10 people have adopted the habit of turning the tap off while they brush their teeth. Have you?

Building Long-Term Eco-Friendly Habits



Retire your dryer

Consider using a drying rack whenever possible instead of throwing your clothes in the dryer. You'll save money, save energy and prolong the life of your clothes.

Switch to better bulbs

Ninety percent of the electricity used by incandescent light bulbs is given off as heat, which is wasted energy and money. Here's a bright(er) idea: Switch to LEDs, CFLs or halogen bulbs instead. They use as little as 20 percent of the electricity — reducing your energy bill and your carbon footprint.

Refresh your air filters

Clean by vacuuming or rinsing with water or replace your HVAC filters every three months. Your heater or air conditioning will blow more efficiently and draw less power.

Dial down your heat or A/C when you're away

Adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees (higher during the summer, lower during the winter) for eight hours each day will yield up to a 10 percent savings on your annual energy bill and help shrink your carbon footprint. Go a step further by adding insulated window curtains to block drafts in the winter and sunlight in the summer.

Switch to rechargeable batteries

Are you still using old-fashioned, single-use, alkaline batteries in devices like your TV's remote control? Try rechargeable batteries instead. You'll save money over time and help cut down on the billions of dollars worth of batteries sold each year in

the United States, most of which never see a recycling facility. And for dead batteries collecting dust in your drawer: Drop them off at a local recycling that accepts them (be sure to check regulations and restrictions first). Just don't toss them in the trash!

Get a solar charger for your phone

Over the course of a year, a traditional wall charger uses about 7 KWh of energy to charge your phone (assuming you plug it in every day), and a plugged-in charger uses energy even when it's not charging anything. With more than four billion smartphones in the world, that's billions of watts of electricity that could be saved if everyone switched to solar chargers, which simply need to be placed near a sunny spot in your home.

Try a smaller screen

Streaming one hour of video on a TV uses about 15 times as much energy as it would on a phone and three times as much as a laptop. Save some watts by tuning into a smaller screen and consider scheduling weekly, screen-free time to reduce your footprint further.

Make your own cleanser

You can create a variety of powerful, homemade cleansers using basic pantry staples, such as baking soda, vinegar or even toothpaste. Make your own glass cleaner, grease buster, detergent booster and more. New direct-to-consumer companies will send you glass containers and refills in the mail; to cut down on shipping weight, some companies even send tablets you dissolve in water. No matter the route, you'll reduce your plastic consumption and help keep nasty chemicals out of the environment.

Try a smaller screen

Streaming one hour of video on a TV uses about 15 times as much energy as it would on a phone and three times as much as a laptop. Save some watts by tuning into a smaller screen and consider scheduling weekly, screen-free time to reduce your footprint further.

Turn your bathroom into an eco-room

Try to make your bathroom a plastic-free zone. Buy bar soap and shampoo; get a bamboo toothbrush (some have replaceable heads); and switch to toothpaste tablets instead of tough-to-recycle tubes. Remember: It may only stay in your home for a few weeks, but it will linger in landfills or oceans for generations.

Wash your hands of wet wipes

These convenient cleaning aids conceal a dirty secret: Most are made with plastics, which don't biodegrade but break down into microplastics that infiltrate our food chain.

Support your local recycler

As much of plastic waste is shipped overseas for recycling adding to its carbon footprint you're better off opting for products in glass, metal or paper packaging, all of which are more likely to be recycled locally. Just in case, check with local officials to make sure that nothing in your recycling bin is headed abroad.

Conclusion

Creating a healthier, eco-friendly home doesn't require a complete lifestyle overhaul. It's about making mindful, sustainable choices one habit at a time. From reducing plastic waste to using natural cleaning products and conserving energy, each step you take brings you closer to a cleaner home and a healthier planet.

Remember, every small action adds up. Whether you start by switching to reusable bags, composting your food scraps, or simply turning off lights when not in use, you're making a difference. These habits not only benefit the environment but also promote better health and well-being for you and your family.

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