

THE GREEN CHALLENGE

HOME EDITION

STAR-TELEGRAM

It's one thing to say you want to live a green lifestyle. But what exactly does it mean to be green? What do you have to do? How much does it cost? And in the grand scheme of things, what impact, if any, do your individual actions have on the environment as a whole?

Finding the answers to these and other questions was the idea behind the Star-Telegram's Green Challenge.

The newspaper spent several weeks talking to academicians, home builders, energy efficiency experts, and a former federal Environmental Protection Agency chief of staff. These experts consistently said that to live green, you must focus on these five categories: Travel, water use, food, recycling and energy efficiency.

Based on the experts' advice, we devised the Green Challenge. While each of the four participating families learned something about saving the earth, it soon became clear that nobody goes green exactly the same way. Here's a five point plan to get you started. Each suggestion is pretty easy and can be done immediately. And remember one important thing our experts agreed on: Every individual's efforts count.

TRAVEL

- Cut the number of car trips each week by tackling multiple errands at once. For example, fill up your car and go to the grocery store, instead of taking a separate trip for each.
- Carpool, or take public transit, at least two times a week.
- Drive under 60 mph on the freeway.

WATER USE

- Limit showers to five minutes and avoid baths.
- Turn the water off while soaping up, then turn it back on to wash off, at least three times a week.
- Wait until you have a full load of laundry before washing.
- Do not rinse dishes before putting them in the dishwasher.

FOOD

- Buy locally grown food from farmers markets and other outlets. Transporting food around the world in ships, trains and trucks uses energy and creates pollution.
- Don't buy bottled water. Bottled water usually is transported from thousands of miles away, using a great deal of energy, as opposed to water from the tap.
- Buy organic fruits and vegetables.

RECYCLE

- Buy as many items as possible that come in recycle-friendly packages.
- Keep recycling items clean.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- Keep the thermostat no lower than 78 during the day.
- Replace three regular light bulbs with energy-efficient bulbs each week.
- Ensure electronics and appliances are turned off when not in use.

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DAILY LOG

STAR-TELEGRAM

DATE:

TRANSPORTATION

Total miles driven today:

Car 1 _____

Car 2 _____

What did you do today to limit your travel? (carpooling, combining errands, walking, etc.)

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Thermostat setting:

_____ during the day

_____ in the evening

_____ overnight

Were you comfortable with the temperature of your house?

What did you do to conserve electricity? Turn off lights, limit the use of appliances?

RECYCLING

Today you recycled:

___ newspapers/other paper

___ cans and bottles

___ other

Anything you didn't recycle?

Anything you tried to recycle but couldn't — or didn't know how or where to do so?

Did you find other uses/new owners for anything today — magazines, clothing, newspapers, bottles, furniture?

WATER USE

Did you:

___ water the lawn

___ run the dishwasher

___ wash clothes (how many loads? ___ with hot water?)

___ do anything else that used a large amount of water

What did you do today to conserve water?

FOOD

Did you buy groceries today? If so, where?

Did you find produce, eggs, meat, milk or other items that were produced locally?

Do you know where your meat and produce came from?

Did you opt for any organic items? What did you select?

INNOVATION

Did you come up with a new way of living green? Whether it's big or small, tell us about it.