

# Assess yourself

## Are You Doing All You Can to Protect the Environment?

Environmental problems often seem too big for one person to make a difference. Each day, though, there are things you can do. For each statement below, indicate how often you follow the described behavior.

**Always Usually Sometimes Never**

- |          |          |          |          |  |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|--|
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>1.</b> Whenever possible, I walk or ride my bicycle rather than drive a car.  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>2.</b> I carpool to school or work.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>3.</b> I follow the manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule for my car.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>4.</b> When the oil in my car is changed, I make sure that used oil is properly recycled, rather than dumped on the ground or into a floor drain. |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5.</b> I use air conditioning only as needed on very hot days and open windows for air circulation when possible.                                 |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>6.</b> I turn off the lights when a room is not being used.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>7.</b> I take a shower rather than a bath most of the time.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>8.</b> I have water-saving devices installed on my shower, toilet, and sinks.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>9.</b> I make sure faucets and toilets do not leak.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>10.</b> I use bath towels more than once before putting them in the wash.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>11.</b> I wear my clothes more than once between washings, when appropriate.  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>12.</b> I limit my use of the clothes dryer and line dry my clothes as often as possible.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>13.</b> I purchase biodegradable soaps and detergents.  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>14.</b> I use biodegradable trash bags.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>15.</b> At home, I use dishes and utensils rather than Styrofoam or plastic.  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>16.</b> When I buy prepackaged foods, I choose the ones with the least packaging.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>17.</b> I do not subscribe to newspapers and magazines that I can view online.  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>18.</b> I use an energy efficient hair dryer.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>19.</b> I recycle plastic shopping bags.  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>20.</b> I don't run water continuously when washing the dishes, shaving, or brushing my teeth.  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>21.</b> I use unbleached or recycled paper.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>22.</b> I use both sides of printer paper and other paper when possible.  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>23.</b> I donate items I'm no longer using to charity so someone else can use them.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>24.</b> I use a refillable mug for coffee or tea instead of a new paper cup each time I buy a hot beverage.                                       |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>25.</b> I use a refillable water bottle rather than buying bottled water.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>26.</b> I clean up after myself while enjoying the outdoors (picnicking, camping, etc.).  |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>27.</b> I volunteer for clean-up days in the community in which I live.   |
| <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>28.</b> I consider candidates' positions on environmental issues before casting my vote.  |

## For Further Thought

Review your scores. Are your responses mostly 1s and 2s? If not, what actions can you take to become more environmentally responsible? Are there ways to help the environment on this list that you had not thought of before? Are there behaviors not on the list that you are already doing?



# YOUR PLAN FOR CHANGE

The **Assessyourself** activity gave you the chance to look at your behavior and consider ways to conserve energy, save water, reduce waste, and otherwise help protect the planet. Now that you have considered these results, you can take steps to become more environmentally responsible.

### Today, you can:

- Find out how much energy you are using. Visit [www.carbonfund.org](http://www.carbonfund.org), [www.carbonoffsets.org](http://www.carbonoffsets.org), or [www.greatestplanet.org](http://www.greatestplanet.org) to find out what your carbon footprint is and to learn about projects you can support to offset your own emissions and energy usage. New carbon offset programs and organizations are popping up all the time, so watch for other opportunities to counter your carbon usage.
- Reduce the amount of paper waste in your mailbox. You can stop junk mail, such as credit card offers and unwanted catalogs, by visiting the Direct Marketing Association's Mail Preference Service site at [www.dmchoice.org](http://www.dmchoice.org). You can also call 1-888-5 OPT OUT to put an end to unwanted mail. In addition, the website [www.catalogchoice.org](http://www.catalogchoice.org) is a free service that lets you decline paper catalogs you no longer want to receive.

### Within the next 2 weeks, you can:

- Look into joining a local environmental group, attending a campus environmental event, or taking an environmental science course.
- Take part in a local clean-up day or recycling drive. These can be fun opportunities to meet like-minded people while benefiting the planet.

### By the end of the semester, you can:

- Interview and talk with your campus' dining hall director about initiating a compost recycling program. Check out other universities with policies and plans for minimizing their food waste through composting: [www.grn.org/campus/campus\\_compost.html](http://www.grn.org/campus/campus_compost.html). The EPA provides information on setting up an indoor compost bin at [www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/composting/by\\_compost.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/rrr/composting/by_compost.htm).
- Make a habit of recycling everything you can. Find out what items can be recycled in your neighborhood and designate a box or bin to hold recyclable materials—cans, bottles,

plastic, newspapers, junk mail, and so on—until you can transport them to a curbside bin or drop-off center.

- Work to influence the environment on a larger scale. Take part in an environmental activism group on campus or in your community. Listen carefully to what political candidates say about the environment. Let your legislators know how you feel about environmental issues and that you will vote according to their record on the issues.

