



# The ELC's Conscious Consumer Guide

Life Hacks for a Happier, Healthier, more Sustainable World!

1. **BYOB: Bring your own bags** to the grocery store. After unpacking groceries, immediately put reusable bags back into the car so you don't forget them for your next shopping trip.
2. **Avoid Styrofoam.** Keep reusable Tupperware containers in your car for restaurant leftovers.
3. **Skip the single use plastics.** Ziplock bags, plastic containers and straws are used once and last for decades! Plastic also breaks down into smaller pieces known as micro-plastics that pollute our water, air and wildlife. Eventually they are ingested by humans. Bamboo and metal reusable options are available!
4. **Replace bottled water with a water filter.** Water filtration systems can be as simple as a Brita pitcher that you keep in the refrigerator, or as advanced as a sink faucet mounted system.
5. **Purchase local whenever possible** (especially local, seasonal food). Food packaging, processing, shipping, refrigeration and storage account for a massive amount of energy usage, especially in the United States. A great place to start your conscious consumer journey is with fresh, seasonal produce from the local farmers market!
6. **Have a few meat-free meals per week.** Beef, lamb, pork, and other livestock produce a large amount of methane (a greenhouse gas that is 25-times stronger than carbon dioxide!), and require a substantial amount of land and resources. Moreover, animal waste runoff from farms pollutes waterways as the primary source of nitrogen and phosphorus which can cause fish kills, algae blooms, and decrease aquatic life. Also, be aware of where your food comes from; shrimp farmers are responsible for the destruction of nearly 40% of the world's mangrove forests.
7. **Be conscious of your clothing.** Purchase second hand when possible, and donate unwanted clothes rather than throwing away. Most clothing sold in the US is made in other countries and must be shipped to American stores, making up 10% of humanity's carbon footprint. Moreover, up to 85% of textiles go to the landfill each year, and clothing production dries up water sources and pollutes waterways.
8. **Reduce fertilizers on your lawn.** Instead of grass, decorate your yard with Florida native plants as they don't require chemicals to thrive. Fertilizers run into our waterways and cause harmful algae blooms, and non-native plants can have a detrimental effect on native plants and animals (plus many native plants do not require regular watering!)
9. **Keep the cleaning green.** Many household cleaners can have toxic chemicals that are harmful to both the environment and you! They pollute the water we drink and air we breathe. Purchase products made with natural ingredients or just use white vinegar (check a product's environmental rating at EWG.org).
10. **Compost to reduce waste.** Use a compost bin at home or bring in left over fruits and veggies to the ELC for composting. Food scraps that end up in a landfill generate methane which is a powerful greenhouse gas; alternatively, properly composted food waste produces carbon dioxide, a nutrient-dense natural fertilizer for plants, and a happy home for worms. Planning meals and making a list before grocery shopping is also one of the most effective ways you can reduce food waste.
11. **Check your home for sources of "vampire energy".** Appliances that leech energy even when they are shut off are modern vampires that waste power and increase electricity bills! Unplug electronics when they are not in use. Check online for a list of common energy suckers.
12. **Reduce paper usage.** Use washable small hand towels or napkins made of organic materials (such as cotton or bamboo) instead of paper towels for cleaning and spills.

*Our mission is to educate, inspire and empower all people to be active stewards of the environment and their own well-being.*