

# What Does It Mean to Have an Eco-Friendly Home?

Being "eco-friendly" involves adopting practices that conserve and protect the environment. Making simple changes around the house can minimize environmental harm, and it's easier than you might think. These small adjustments not only help the environment but can also save you money and improve your health. Start gradually, and you'll be on your way to a thrifty, healthy, and eco-friendly home.




## Simple changes to make your home more sustainable:

- 1 Switch to LED Lightbulbs**  
When a lightbulb goes out, replace it with an LED bulb. They last up to 13 years and save energy, despite a slightly higher initial cost. Save money with lower electric bills and less frequent replacement costs.
- 2 Replace Paper Towels with Rags**  
Use rags or washable cloths when possible to reduce waste and save money on paper goods. You can even repurpose old t-shirts and towels by cutting them into cloth-size squares and using them for cleaning tasks.
- 3 Collect Rain for Watering Plants**  
Set up a rain barrel in your garden to collect rainwater. You can use this water to nourish your plants, thus reducing the need to turn on the hose. Improve the aesthetic of your yard by finding a container that matches the style of your home.
- 4 Compost Kitchen Scraps**  
Start a small compost bin for food scraps like fruit peels and vegetable leftovers to help reduce landfill waste and create nutrient-rich soil for your plants.
- 5 Upgrade Your Windows**  
Single-paned windows use a lot of energy. Dual-paned windows save energy and may qualify for rebates or tax credits. Also consider switching to energy-efficient curtains or blinds which can further regulate home temperature and reduce utility bills.

## Larger changes to make your home more sustainable:

- 6 Install a Tankless Water Heater**  
Tankless water heaters heat water on demand, saving energy and lasting longer than traditional water heaters that run continuously.
- 7 Prioritize Energy-Efficient Appliances**  
The next time you need to replace an appliance, look for Energy Star-certified appliances to save energy and money on utilities. Not ready to buy a new oven or dishwasher? You can still conserve energy by covering pans when cooking and running your dishwasher or washing machine only when full.

## Don't Dismiss Bigger Upgrades

Consider replacing outdated plumbing fixtures with WaterSense-labeled fixtures to save water and money. Installing solar panels is generally a big expense, but they can help save energy and reduce pollution, and often pay for themselves over time. Looking for cost cuts or opting for energy-saving options when big repairs are needed can make larger upgrades smart and eco-friendly investments. 

## How Can I Tell if a Product Is Eco-Friendly?

Some companies claim their products are good for the environment when they're not. This is called "greenwashing." To be sure a product is truly eco-friendly, look for certifications from trustworthy organizations like the Environmental Protection Agency or Energy Star.

