

## Green Living

# Resolve to Make Your Household More Earth-Friendly in the New Year



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Resolving to green up your act in the New Year? Here are just a few tweaks you can make right at home to substantially reduce your environmental footprint.

### Make Appliance Upgrades

Home appliances are improving all the time, with many newer models designed specifically with efficiency in mind. If your home appliances, such as your washer, dryer, dishwasher, refrigerator and HVAC system, are on the older side, it may be time to replace one or more of these items. Over time, you'll offset the upfront cost with reduced energy bills. Plus, you'll be helping protect the climate. Look for ENERGY STAR-rated products, which have met strict EPA standards.

### Optimize Heating and Cooling

North American Technician Excellence (NATE) offers the following energy-saving tips to help you keep your home comfort system running at peak performance:

- Change your air filters monthly, or as directed by the manufacturer.
- Add weatherstripping and caulk around windows and doors to improve your home's insulation. Improperly insulated walls, floors, attics, basements and crawlspaces waste energy and can also lead to moisture imbalance.

- Install a programmable thermostat to help regulate temperatures.
- Don't keep clutter near your HVACR units, and don't store anything next to them that could impede ventilation. Likewise, keep vents and returns free of obstructions. Don't lay carpet over vents, place furniture over or in front of them, or obstruct airflow.
- Dry air feels cooler than moist air. A simple humidifier may make your home feel five degrees warmer.
- Even the most efficient system can suffer if it's not properly maintained. For optimum comfort and sustainability, make sure all your HVACR installation, maintenance and other work is performed by a NATE-certified technician. NATE-certified technicians have demonstrated their knowledge of today's increasingly sophisticated heating and cooling systems by passing a nationally recognized test developed and supported by all segments of the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning industry. Better installation and service means your equipment will run at peak efficiency. Visit [nate.org](http://nate.org) for additional HVACR energy-savings tips and resources, and to find a NATE-certified technician in your area.

### Reduce Food Waste

American food production uses 10% of the nation's total energy budget, 50% of its land, and 80% of its freshwater, according to [FoodRescue.net](http://FoodRescue.net). Unfortunately, up to 40% of all food ends up in landfills. Label food items in your pantry and fridge and organize them by date to help ensure you consume food before it spoils. If you see that you've prepared too much of a certain item, freeze it. Of course, many foods produce unavoidable scraps. Use them to create stock or compost them. Composting will reduce your home's contribution to landfills while enriching your garden. Bonus: it's also a great way to reduce yardwork waste.

### Make an Impact Today

Want a quick project you can complete in an afternoon? Swap out incandescent lightbulbs for energy efficient LEDs. According to the EPA, residential LEDs -- especially ENERGY STAR-rated products -- use at least 75% less energy, and last up to 25 times longer.

This year, consider making Earth-friendly New Year's resolutions. A few tweaks can reduce your household's impact on the planet.

(StatePoint)