Carbon Footprint

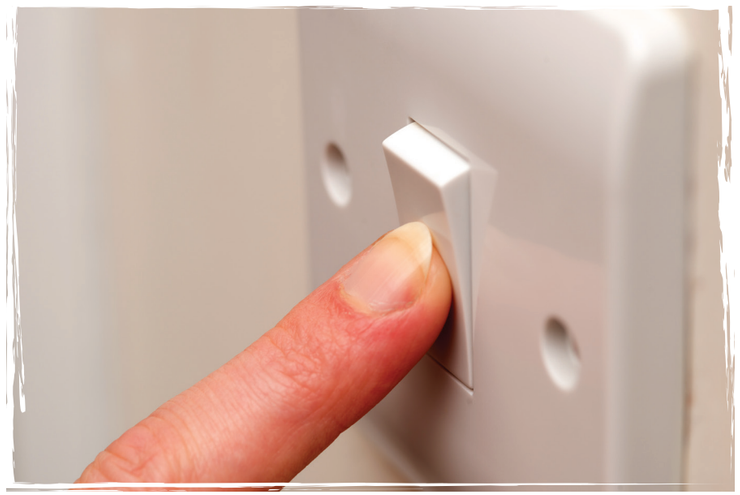
Reducing Impact Over Autumn

With autumn comes milder weather, making it easier than any other time of year to reduce your carbon footprint

As the weather begins to grow cooler, it is helpful to start thinking of ways that you can actively reduce your carbon footprint over autumn. No matter where you live or how big or small your family is, there is always something that you can do to help make your lifestyle more environmentally friendly – and, chances are, you will also save money!

Depending on where you live in Australia, autumn can either be a time to prepare for cooler weather by reducing heat loss (Melbourne, I'm thinking of you), or it may be time to start reducing reliance on air conditioning as the weather takes its time cooling down, particularly for those who live in the Sunshine State and Northern Territory. Autumn can also be a great time to look at sustainable fashion choices when updating your wardrobe, and being mindful of extra waste at Easter time.

Eight tips for reducing carbon footprint over autumn



1 Reduce heating/cooling: For those of you who reside in the cooler areas of Australia, the transition from hot to cold weather will likely be quite quick. Try to minimise heater use by opting for warmer clothes around the house. While it can be tempting to turn the heater on, especially for those of us who already miss the warmer weather, reach for a cosy blanket or a woolly jumper instead. It's also a great opportunity to snuggle up with a cup of tea and a good book! By avoiding the heater as much as you can in autumn, you are also helping to prepare for greater energy use in the winter.

On the other hand, if you live in an area where the weather is still quite warm throughout autumn, now is a great time to give your air conditioner a well-deserved break and open up the windows instead. Alternatively, keeping the curtains closed on sunny days can also be an effective way to keep out the heat. If you must use the air conditioner or heater, keep in mind that for every degree you increase the cooling/heating, your energy consumption increases by up to 10%.

2 Turn off appliances after use: Now is a great time to get into the habit of switching off appliances at the power point when they are not in use. While it may seem like an obvious way to save energy, most of us are guilty of leaving them on, either because we forget or it is simply more convenient. However, it is definitely worth remembering to switch things off at the wall after each use or even just overnight and during the day when you're out, as you could save yourself up to 10% of your total household electricity use. We recommend getting into the habit of switching off at the wall with big items such as the TV, computer and any video game consoles, and kitchen appliances like toasters and kettles.

3 Get a clothes drying rack: Clothes dryers can eat into your energy bill, especially if you become reliant on it during the colder months. Unfortunately colder, shorter days and increased wet weather mean that sometimes our clothes don't dry properly out on the line by the time it gets dark. Instead of throwing them in the dryer though, it is worthwhile to invest in a clothes rack. You can buy foldaway ones at a relatively low price, which you can set up on the verandah or inside the house to dry your clothes overnight. The clothes rack can then be easily stored away in the cupboard or under your bed when you aren't using it.

4 Keep your showers short: Most of us are guilty of staying in the shower for just that little bit longer in order to stay warm on a cold night! But did you know that just a few extra minutes of hot water use can make a considerable difference to your power bill? It's helpful to think of it this way: the hot water from your shower uses 20 times the energy as it would to step out of the shower under two heat lights! Be prepared and keep some warm slippers and a bathrobe at the ready, so that you can quickly warm up as soon as you step out of the shower.

5 Reduce waste this Easter: With autumn comes the Easter holidays, where supermarket shelves are brimming with all types of chocolate treats wrapped in bright aluminium foil, plastics and cardboard packaging. As you indulge in Easter egg chocolates with friends and family, it is good to be mindful of the extra waste that is produced around Easter time. It is best to pick chocolates that use less packaging, and remember to recycle wherever possible, including the aluminium foil that the eggs come wrapped in. Better yet, have a go at making your own Easter treats or decorations! All it takes is a quick Google search to come up with some simple ideas and recipes.

6 Be mindful when updating your wardrobe: As the seasons change, many of us like to update our wardrobes. While it can be fun to indulge in new clothes, you can be more conscious of the environment by looking at what you already have in order to work out what items you actually need. This is also a good opportunity to sort through all the clothes you don't wear anymore and recycle them to charity bins. Consider buying second-hand clothes from charity shops or visiting online sites such as eBay where people sell their unwanted clothes – this is a great way to find unique, vintage pieces too! If you prefer

Hot Tip:

The Australian Greenhouse Calculator is a useful tool for working out how your lifestyle contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. You can find the calculator at www.epa.vic.gov.au/AGC/home.html





to buy new clothing, try to select high-quality items that will last for years to come, or explore sustainable fashion lines that use eco-friendly materials such as organic cotton.

7 Go local: By buying your fresh food locally, you are helping to reduce the energy, emissions and travel miles that are associated with the fruit and vegetables that have been transported over long distances to the supermarkets. So resist buying those delicious strawberries until summer, and instead try and stick to buying fruit that is in season and available at your local fresh food markets. For autumn, the best fruits available include apples, bananas, figs, grapes, kiwifruit, peaches and pears. Eating seasonally means your fruit will not only taste better and fresher but it will also be cheaper, and your money will be going back into local farms and communities.

8 Walk more, drive less: With its pleasantly cool temperatures and gorgeous colour changes, autumn is the perfect season to start going on more walks and bike rides. So get out your sneakers, dust off your bike and take advantage of the beautiful weather as the leaves turn from green to golden. Even by aiming to drive just 30 kilometres less per week can make a big overall difference to your personal CO2 emissions each year, so aim to walk or ride your bike to local places instead of getting the car out. Make it a bonding experience by getting the family together on walks, or just go solo and enjoy the relaxing 'me' time. As well as benefiting the environment, you will also be improving your health and fitness and saving money on fuel.

For further information, please visit: www.yourenergysavings.gov.au/guides/autumn (Department of the Environment and Energy) **HG**

Win!

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