

Household Water Conservation Tips (2020 updated)



Many of our daily activities include water in some way or another. It may not seem like much when we spend an extra couple of minutes in the shower or leave the tap running when we brush our teeth but it all adds up. Reducing the amount of water that is being used each day is not just great for saving money, it is also helping the environment too, not to mention reducing pollution and extending the life of your sewer system. The combination of using water excessively and poor water management can lead to water shortages in the future and this is a real risk that impacts all of us. Water conservation is essential no matter where you live. Use this guide to help you spot where you are using water unnecessarily and how you can cut down on the amount of water you are using, inside and outside your home.

Why Save Water?

Only [3% of the water](#) on Earth is fresh water and only 0.5% of this is available for drinking. With growing human populations and such a small percentage of water available for consumption, it is immediately clear why conserving water is so important. Saving water does not mean we need to drastically change our lifestyles, some of the simplest steps can help save a large amount of water each year.

Before we get into our water saving tips, below are some of the key reasons we should all be helping to conserve water:

- Minimize drought and water shortages – by saving water now we can ensure we are better protected against drought in the future.
- Reduce environmental impact – using less water helps us preserve the environment through reduced pollution and improved conservation of resources.
- Water is essential for growing food – water is essential in food production, if we continue to use water as if it is endless we will face major food shortage issues in the future. However, conserving water ensures food security.
- Save money – on a personal level, reducing your water usage will also help you to save money on your bills.

There is a range of reasons to conserve water, the [United Nations Sustainable Development](#) estimate that two-thirds of the global population could be facing

serious water availability problems by 2025 unless we make changes to our water usage now. How can we conserve water? Use the tips below to start saving water today.

Ways to Conserve Water Indoors

Let's start with how we can conserve water inside the home. As we use a lot of water in the bathroom, kitchen and when doing laundry, we have separated these out and offered tips on each area individually.

Tips for Bathroom Usage

Saving water in the bathroom comes down to habits more than anything. One of the great things about conserving water is that it doesn't cost you a lot (if anything at all), it just requires minor changes in the way you use taps and water. Here are the top ways you can save water when you are in the bathroom:

- Fit a low-flow shower head – this reduces the amount of water you will be using during showers without impacting the water pressure. It's a simple switch that can save one person who showers daily over [2,000 gallons/ 9092 litres](#) of water a year. This figure rises with the amount of people in the house and involves nothing more than changing the shower head. Shower heads are simple to change and fit too so it would be quick and easy to switch.
- Make sure the toilet is in good condition and is working properly – a toilet with worn-out fittings can make the toilet run when it doesn't need to. Newer toilets are far more efficient but by maintaining the one you currently have you can reduce the amount of water being used too. To reduce the amount of water needed to fill the toilet tank you can put pebbles or sand into a plastic bottle and place this in your toilet tank, this is a simple, cheap and effective way to save water every time you flush the toilet. This won't impact the efficiency of the toilet, all it will do is simply reduce the amount of water being used.
- Turn off the tap when you are brushing your teeth – letting the water run while you are brushing your teeth is letting water flow straight into the drain without using it for anything at all, it is such a waste. Instead, turn off the tap until you are ready to rinse and clean your toothbrush. An average of [2 gallons/ 9 litres](#) of water flows from a tap in one minute so this simple and easy act of turning the tap off soon saves significant amounts.
- Plug the sink when shaving – rather than using running water to rinse your razor, put a few inches of water into the sink and use that instead. This is the same principal as the above point. Using running water soon adds up so putting the plug in the sink and doing it that way will use far less water while achieving the same thing.
- Don't overfill the bath – when you have a bath, fill it about halfway. There's no need to fill it all the way to the top as the water level will rise once you are in the bath. A partially filled bath uses less water than most showers so baths aren't bad but don't fill them all the way up.
- Shorten your shower time – try to reduce the amount of time you spend in the shower. You could get a shower timer or play a song that is the length of time

you want to spend in the shower so you don't lose track of time. If the shower takes a long time to heat up, collect this water for watering plants or flushing the toilet.

- Repair any leaks or broken valves – don't let leaks continue as this is wasting water, even if you think the leak is minor it soon builds up to a large amount of water. You can check your toilet for leaks by putting a couple of drops of food colouring into the toilet tank and waiting. If the colour appears in the toilet bowl when you haven't yet flushed the toilet then it indicates a leak.

Tips for Kitchen Usage

Just like the bathroom, saving water in the kitchen is simple and straightforward. Use these tips whenever you are in the kitchen to reduce the amount of water being used:

- Only switch the dishwasher on when you have a full load – try not to run the dishwasher for small loads because you will end up running the dishwasher multiple times for multiple small loads and this will result in twice as much water to wash the same number of dishes as one full load. It may be surprising, but a dishwasher is actually more water-efficient per load than washing dishes by hand. A good quality dishwasher also won't need you to pre-rinse dishes before loading them which will help to save even more water.
- Don't leave the tap running if you are hand washing dishes – if you don't have a dishwasher and you are washing by hand, fill up a basin with soapy water and, if you have a second basin, fill it with clean water for rinsing. Then you can reduce the amount of water needed to wash the dishes. Also, don't leave the tap running when you are cleaning vegetables, just use a pot of clean water.
- Fit a water aerator – using a water aerator on the kitchen tap will help to reduce the amount of water that is being used without impacting the water pressure. This will help save water every time the tap is in use.
- Fill a jug with water and put it in the fridge – this is handy because if you ever need cold water it is then immediately available from the fridge. This reduces the need for you to run the tap while waiting for the water to be cold enough for what you need.
- Steam vegetables instead of boiling them – steaming vegetables is better for retaining nutrients but is also good for saving water. If you do boil vegetables, try to make use of the water by using it for stock or letting it cool and watering plants with it.
- Check pipes and valves (including the dishwasher hose) for leaks – just like in the bathroom, keep an eye on the kitchen pipes too. If you do find a leak, it will need to be fixed. It's a good idea to know where your household water stop valve is as this will come in very handy if you ever have a burst pipe.
- Use a compost bin – composting food waste is more energy efficient and water efficient than using an in-sink garbage disposal unit.

Tips for Laundry

When washing dirty laundry, try to:

- Only wash full loads of laundry – you can adjust the water level to the amount needed for the load. In more energy efficient models this is an automatic feature. The setting you choose will impact how much water is used, for example a heavy-duty cycle will use more water than a regular cycle. Extra rinse settings will also use more water.
- When it is time to invest in a new washing machine, try to choose one that is energy and water efficient – look at the Energy Star rating of the washing machines as this is a clear guideline indicating how energy efficient the machine is compared to other machines of the same size. Generally, [front-loading machines are more water-efficient](#) than top-loading machines.

Conserving Water Outside

If you have a garden, you may also be using a large amount of water outside to care for your plants and your lawn. These tips can help you only use the water you need to use:

- Only water the lawn when it is needed – when you do need to water the lawn make sure you water it enough that the water seeps down to the roots otherwise the water may stay on the surface, evaporate and be wasted. The watering needs of the lawn will depend on the recent weather so it is best not to have a strict watering schedule. You can step on a patch of grass to see if it needs to be watered, if the grass springs back it doesn't need to be watered just yet.
- Water the garden when it is cooler – it is best to water the garden early in the morning as this reduces how much water will evaporate and also helps prevent fungus from growing.
- Set your sprinklers properly – make sure your sprinklers do not water areas that don't need it. It is best not to water on windy days as the water will be carried in the wind so will not end up where you intended it to go. If the sprinkler is spraying a paved area, adjust it accordingly. If you are using an automatic sprinkler system, set it to water the garden in the morning to prevent loss through evaporation.
- Hand water the garden – sprinklers are convenient but watering by hand uses less water and gives you a chance to see how your plants are doing.
- Place mulch in the garden – putting mulch around trees and plants can help slow the evaporation of moisture.
- Choose native plants that require little water – this will help you enjoy a beautiful garden without needing to give them a huge amount of water. It is also a good idea to group plants together by their watering needs so you can keep drought-tolerant and thirstier plants separate allowing you to only water each zone as and when it needs it.

- Control weeds to reduce competition for resources – getting rid of weeds and any plants you do not want to grow will give the plants you do want to grow a better chance of thriving as it will reduce the competition for water.
- Discourage children from playing with the hose and sprinklers – although fun, this is very wasteful and it is best to keep water for other uses.
- Don't run the hose when you are washing the car – the hose is only needed for rinsing, washing the car with a bucket and a sponge is far more water-efficient. If you don't want to wash your car at home, there are some water-efficient car washes that recycle their water. There are even some [waterless car washing systems](#) available now too.
- Sweep the driveway instead of spraying it – brush away the dirt and fallen leaves to clean the driveway instead of spraying it with the hose. This will save you money and time as the brush will handle stuck on dirt better than a regular hose.
- Cover up the pool – if you have a pool, use a pool cover as it helps to retain the pool's temperature and reduces evaporation which in turn reduces the amount of replacement water needed.
- Catch Rainwater – catching rainwater is the perfect solution for watering plants instead of using tap water. You can capture rainwater in a large drum, but make sure it is covered to keep insects and mosquitos away. You can also use recycled water from the house to water plants e.g. water taken from the shower when waiting for it to heat up, old water from pet bowls and cups or water used to boil or wash vegetables.

Water Conservation Tips for Kids

The whole family can participate in conserving water. It is important to teach kids about water and how we can save water by making small changes in our daily habits. Below are 6 super simple ways kids can help reduce their water usage:

1. Turn off the tap – turn off the tap when you are brushing your teeth, lathering up soap in your hands and washing your face. This stops the water from flowing into the drain when you aren't using it. Think of how much water you can save just by turning the tap off! When you turn the tap off make sure it is not dripping, you may have to turn it quite tight. If you see the tap is still dripping even after you've turned it as far as you can, ask an adult to help you.
2. Re-wear clothes that aren't dirty – sometimes we throw clothes into the wash after wearing them once but most clothes can be worn a few times before being washed. If, at the end of the day, your clothes are still clean think about wearing them again before putting them into the wash.
3. Use old water to water plants instead of throwing it away – older water in cups and water bottles can be given to plants. You can help the plants in and around your house grow by offering them water that you aren't going to use. If you see your parents rinsing dishes or washing vegetables why not ask if you can use that water to give to the plants instead of letting it disappear down the drain.

4. Avoid toys that require a flow of water – some toys are not water-efficient and as water is such an important resource it is better to avoid toys that need water. Don't worry though! There are loads of great toys that don't require water to work, try to play with these instead.
5. Be a leak detective – we think you'd make a great detective so why not check the house for leaky pipes. Keep an eye out for dripping taps and leaks and if you ever see a leak be sure to tell your parents so they can fix it. By working together, you can save a lot of water and keep everything working as it should at home.
6. Throw tissues into the bin instead of the toilet – flushing tissues is a bad habit that wastes water. If you blow your nose or clean a spill, throw the tissue into the bin instead of throwing it into the toilet. Every time the toilet is flushed it uses around [1.6 gallons](#)/ 7.2 litres of water. Regularly flushing the toilet accounts for almost a quarter of daily water use in the house. Only flush the toilet when it is necessary and remember that the toilet is not a bin so don't throw rubbish or tissues into it.

Other Water Saving Tips

We've looked at some of the most effective ways you can save water at home. Here are a few extra tips that may also help:

- Check your water bill – a water bill with high water use can indicate a leak.
- When you buy new appliances, choose energy-efficient options – energy-efficient appliances will save water and will save you money in the long-run.
- Insulate your water pipes – this can reduce the amount of time spent waiting for the water to heat up.
- Recycle water where possible – collect water from various activities such as food preparation and rinsing dishes to water the garden instead of letting it go to waste when it can still be used.

Further Resources

If you are keen to find out more about water conservation, are looking for further reading or you want to discover even more great ways you can reduce your water usage, check out the resources listed below:

- [Key organizations helping the global water crisis](#) – this is an interesting list of 10 nonprofits that are fighting the water crisis and what they are doing to help.
- [Water Use It Wisely](#) – this is a water conservation campaign that makes it fun to learn about water and ways to conserve it. They offer a range of resources, including resources for teachers and games and activities for kids.
- [Waterwise](#) – this is an organization that aims to reduce water consumption and offers lots of water saving tips.
- [Energy Saving Trust](#) – this site takes a look at why saving water is so important as well as how much water we are all using on average and how much this costs.
- [WaterSense Game](#) – the WaterSense Game is a fun game designed for kids, it offers a way to learn about water and water-efficiency.