

A Guide to College Life

# Sustainability 101

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# Welcome

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Dear Students,

Ready to go green this fall? Curious about what it takes to transition your life from conventional to conscious? Say hello to Sustainability 101.

## What is Sustainability 101?

This Project GreenU resource is designed to raise awareness about conscious living, mindful consumption, and the collective impact of individual actions. In collaboration with campus sustainability leaders, Eco Reps, RA's, faculty and staff, this project will inspire incoming students (like you) to take action around environmental sustainability and conscious college living.

Included in this resource are the following items: A Dozen Ways to Green Your Life, Terms to Green Your Vocab, Things to Take to College, Green Packing Checklist and the PGC 2021 Flyer

## About Project GreenU

Project GreenU is a global initiative grounded on college campuses around the world to inform, inspire, and engage students to take action around a healthy, just, and thriving planet. We seek to mentor and mobilize the next generation of young global leaders to develop projects and initiatives that will transition their lives, campuses and communities from conventional to conscious.

## Sign Up for Project Green Challenge

During the month of October, we host to take part in our global initiative: Project Green Challenge (PGC). College students from around the world become inspired and mobilized to take action through simple, fun, and eye-opening daily challenges. Sign up here to participate and earn your chance to attend the Challenge Finals and win the Grand Prize package (valued at \$12,000+). To ask questions, share your ideas or offer feedback, contact us at [info@teensturninggreen.org](mailto:info@teensturninggreen.org).

Look forward to hearing from you!

## The TG Team

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A dozen steps to conscious college life

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# Back to Basics

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## 1. Daily Routine

Shampoos claim to create shiny, frizz-free hair; toothpaste promises pearly whites; and deodorant leaves us smelling fresh... but how? Unfortunately, more often than not, the answer is toxic chemicals. If you flip over any conventional brand – whether it's mouthwash, soap, shave cream, or lotion, you will find an ingredient list of unpronounceable, untested synthetic chemicals. Neither the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) nor any other government review panel has approved the vast majority of the 80,000 ingredients used in these products, making it impossible to know their impact on our bodies and the environment! The good news is, it's easy to green your daily routine. Reliable, accessible, eco alternatives work without the [Dirty Thirty](#) – a list that Teens Turning Green compiled to highlight some of the most common toxic ingredients (out of 82,000+) in conventional body care products.




### Fact

Independent researchers have found repeated use of products containing harmful ingredients can accumulate in our bodies and lead to health problems such as cancer, reproductive harm, neurotoxicity, and skin irritation. But there is good news! Ethically made, USDA certified organic and truly natural products are widely available in stores like Whole Foods Market, independent green grocers, Target, Bed Bath & Beyond, and CVS – just remember to read the label! Also, there are tons of great DIY recipes online, which use ingredients you probably have at home!

### Action

Research ingredients in your favorite body care product on EWG's Skin Deep Database. What kind of hazardous chemicals are used? Pick a greener and healthier alternative that is Skin-Deep approved and share what you learned with all your friends via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, e-mail! Check out the [TG Greener Alternatives list](#) for some great options.

### More Info

-  [The Story of Cosmetics](#)
-  [What's Your Skin Eating? Infographic](#)
-  [Body Pinterest Board](#)

## 2. Food

By choosing USDA Certified Organic, Non-GMO Project verified, Fair Trade certified, or local, we're doing our part to maintain a healthy food system for all. Get to know your food labels! Seek out bar codes on produce that start with the #9 (USDA Certified Organic). Avoid GMO's by looking out for the Non-GMO Project Verified seal and support fair wages and sustainable practices by purchasing items that are Fair Trade certified. Support sustainable ag!




### Fact

The average produce travels approximately 1,500 miles from farm to plate, requiring a massive amount of fuel and energy. Additionally, synthetic pesticides and fertilizers are sprayed on conventional fields, which pollute the air, soil, and water – all of which ultimately damage human health and our fragile environment.

### Action

Write down a list of five key food products you currently have on hand. Research online and find five conscious alternatives to these products and write down a couple of reasons why. Share with your friends.

### More Info

-  [Lexicon of Sustainability \(Seeds\)](#)
-  [Eating Organic vs. Conventional Food](#)
-  [Food Pinterest Board](#)

## 3. Wellness

Let's face it – college can be stressful. While it's great to care about good grades and spending time with our friends, do we remember to care about our health? Academic and social pressures can disrupt our sleep, moods, diet, and our overall wellbeing. To truly thrive, it's vital to remember to stop and relax: go for a hike, to the gym, read a book, drink tea, hang with friends, or meditate in a relaxing place. When your body is feeling deficient from late nights, mid terms, and cafeteria food – just stop and breath.




### Fact

81% of college students do not get enough sleep, which contributes to poor judgment, sour moods, weak memory, bad health, and bad grades! For better sleep, try to maintain a nutritious diet, daily exercise, and find time in your day to do something that makes you happy!

### Action

For 30 minutes a day for one week, take time for yourself; find a beautiful spot outdoors and practice yoga, go on a hike, write in your journal, read a magazine or book... something to break the cycle of school work and make you feel good.

### More Info

-  [Sun Salutation Tutorial](#)
-  [The A - Zzz's Sleep Guide to Wellness](#)
-  [Wellness Pinterest Board](#)

## 4. Style

Much of the clothing we buy relies on unsustainable and often toxic manufacturing processes. A third of a pound of pesticides is required to grow ONE pound of cotton. It takes half a pound of cotton to grow one t-shirt! Conventional cotton production depletes land resources and adversely affects human health and development in communities. As a consumer, you have the power to make a difference; shop at local thrift shops, support eco designers and businesses, organize a clothing swap, or update clothing you already have.




### Fact

Americans throw away more than 68 pounds of clothing and textiles per person per year, clothing and other textiles represent about 4% of the municipal solid waste. Up to 80% of the environmental impact of a t-shirt occurs post purchase (after you've bought it): the water, chemical toxicity, energy use and emissions from washing and drying your clothing.

### Action

Locate and visit the closest vintage, consignment, second-hand, or thrift shop to your campus. Browse through your options and come up with an entire outfit that suits your style. Add up the price tags and calculate how much cheaper this outfit would be versus a similar new one from a department store. You may even like it enough to buy it! Let this inspire you to add a new section to your wardrobe, perhaps right next to the stripes? Call it... ethical style!

### More Info

-  [Thread Documentary Trailer](#)
-  [The Life of a T-Shirt Infographic](#)
-  [Style Pinterest Board](#)

## 5. Clean Green

Chlorine, ammonia, coal tar dyes and monoethanolamine are just a few of the caustic, toxic and volatile organic compounds (VOC's) found in many conventional cleaning supplies. Individually, these chemicals are linked to asthma, reproductive harm, infertility, cancers, and other serious health problems. Manufacturers aren't required to disclose ingredients on labels, making it impossible for consumers to know what's in their products! Before shopping, research the product and chemicals used on [EWG's Household Cleaning Guide](#).




### Fact

80% of chemicals found in everyday-use products lack comprehensive ingredient lists and toxin information. Less than 20% have actually been tested for acute effects and less than 10% have been tested for chronic damages. Furthermore the Silent Spring Institute found concentrations of toxic chemicals inside homes linked to cancer could be 200-500 times higher than outside.

### Action

Research the ingredients of your current laundry detergent online. Does it contain toxic ingredients? Find a greener and healthier alternative or perhaps [make your own](#)! Here are some DIY recipes.

### More Info

-  [Human Experiment Video](#)
-  [Green Cleaning Infographic](#)
-  [Green Clean Pinterest Board](#)

## 6. Zero Waste

Trash is produced every minute of every day, and it doesn't just disappear when you throw it away. It builds up in landfills and pollutes our planet. Americans throw away 25 billion Styrofoam coffee cups each year; one million plastic bags are used worldwide each minute. After only seconds of use these items spend an eternity in landfills taking hundreds, thousands, even millions of years to decompose. Working towards a zero waste future by diverting "trash" is not just a dream – it's a necessity!

### Fact

Americans throw away 25,000,000,000 (that's 25 billion!) Styrofoam coffee cups each year! One million plastic bags are used worldwide each minute. After only seconds of use, these items spend an eternity in landfills – taking hundreds, thousands, even millions of years to decompose. The environmental and public health impact of our daily choices is **massive**!

### Action

For 24 hours, carry around your trash or write down everything you throw away. What could be recycled, reused, composted? What kind of impact are you having? How can you change your habits to live more consciously every day? Start with just one thing.

### More Info

-  [The Story of Stuff](#)
-  [Zero Waste Policies](#)
-  [Zero Waste Pinterest Board](#)

## 7. Water

Our bodies are made up of 60% water. We drink it, shower in it, cook with it – but here's the problem – Americans use way too much water, about 100 gallons per person per day. That's an Olympic-sized swimming pool of water every year! Only 2.5% of the water on earth is fresh and available for use. Of that fresh water 70% is frozen in polar ice caps and 30% lies underground, leaving less than 1% of the world's fresh water for human consumption. Water is being used up faster than it can replenish itself. Conserving water must start with individual choices to limit daily use.




### Fact

On average, Americans use over 100 gallons of water each day! As only 2.5% of earth's water is fresh and available to a population of over seven billion, conserving this precious resource is critical.

### Action

Calculate your water footprint with this web tool [here](#). Make a list of 3 things you can do differently and stick to it for 30 days. After 30 days, maybe they will become habits!

### More Info

-  [Story of Bottled Water](#)
-  [The Facts about Bottled Water](#)
-  [Water Pinterest Board](#)

## 8. Transportation

The modern transportation system depends heavily on fossil fuels, leading to increased CO2 emissions and global warming. Making the conscious decision to walk, ride a bike or take public transportation are great alternatives that relieve our dependence on fossil fuels. In fact, public transit has saved 4 billion gallons of gas and avoided 37 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions. Plus, choosing to walk or ride a bike are great exercises that support the overall health and wellbeing and the environment!

### Fact

The costs of having a car on campus adds up. From paying for a parking pass to spending your extra cash on gas, transportation accounts for 17% of a college student's budget. In fact, college students also pay the highest rates on car insurance. Nowadays, most campuses have great access to public transportation. Instead of driving to school, try taking the bus, walking, or hopping on a bike. This won't just save you money, but will also help you save the planet from excessive amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.

### Action

Dig deeper into the unique ways alternative transportation is offered at your school. Do you have access to a metro rail, car share, bike share or carpool group that people use to find rides off campus? Try to utilize at least ONE of these alternatives on your next trip off campus. Snap a picture of your adventure and share it on social media (Tag Teens Turning Green). If there aren't any forms of ride shares, try getting one implemented on your campus.

### More Info

-  [Transportation and Pollution](#)
-  [Transportation Generation](#)
-  [Transportation EPA](#)

## 9. Sharing

Our material culture tells us to BUY, BUY, BUY! But this mindset necessitates high levels of waste production and resource depletion. Reframing how we think about material objects is vital, a to shift from individual consumption (I have to have my own everything) to collaborative consumption. By participating in sharing networks (ZipCar, thrift shops, book swaps, [yerdle.com](#)) you'll get items you need, when you need them, without purchasing them new. This shift in mindset can dramatically reduce waste and resource use while saving money and building collaborative communities.




### Fact

Found in 30+ countries and 325+ cities, bike sharing programs are one of the fastest-growing modes of transportation in the country. As a result, bike share members drove an average of 523 miles less per year, translating into the reductions of 487.7 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere per bike share user.

### Action

Research sharing networks in your community. What kinds of items do you have that you use only occasionally and can share with others?

### More Info

-  [The Case for Collaborative Consumption, Yerdle](#)
-  [Make Money From Your Unused Stuff](#)
-  [Sharing Pinterest Board](#)

# 10. Carbon Footprint

Daily actions contribute to individual carbon footprints and the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing climate change. The choices we make including how we travel, the food we eat, and what we buy all impact our footprint. If we make these choices through a thoughtful lens, we can help ensure a stable climate and thriving planet for future generations. Calculate your carbon footprint [here](#).




## Fact

Only 40% of the average American's carbon footprint is due to their direct energy use. The other 60% is indirect; it comes from everything we buy and use—goods and services. Pay attention to your consumption and waste habits, and you'll find lots of opportunities to conserve.

## Action

Chart your energy footprint for 24 hours with this [calculator](#). Mark down everything you use that requires energy including flatirons, hairdryers, electric shavers, coffeemakers, toasters, transportation, treadmills, etc. What can you easily change in your daily life to reduce your energy consumption? What impact will it have in your life and on the planet?

## More Info

-  [Do The Math](#)
-  [Carbon Infographic](#)
-  [Carbon Footprint Pinterest Board](#)

# 11. Become Informed

Global movements begin with passion for a particular issue, learning all there is to know, and then spreading the word. Your knowledge is your power and that is truly what brings about long lasting, sustainable change!

## Fact




Global paradigm shifts begin with individuals changing their own practices and products. Each of our actions and collective efforts lie at the root of lasting, sustainable change.

“Being ignorant is not so much a shame, as being unwilling to learn.” - Benjamin Franklin

## Action

Dive deeper into an issue or movement that resonates with you through a TED talk, article, book, documentary, etc. What did you learn? How did it change or strengthen your beliefs and ideas? Share it with the world through Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, etc.

## More Info

-  [Radical Openess](#)
-  [Meaningful Innovation](#)
-  [TTG Pinterest Boards](#)

# 12. Join the Movement

The power is the people. We can each shift from a conventional to a conscious lifestyle. Through collaboration and education, the opportunities for positive change are boundless. Get involved on your campus, in your community, and with Project GreenU! Sign up and join us during the month of October for Project Green Challenge 2014. And, have a chance to win awesome eco prizes valued at up to \$12,000.

About PGC: This global, month-long competition challenges students to transition their lifestyles from conventional to conscious. Through simple, fun, high-impact tasks, students

are asked to research the environmental and social impact of daily actions and practices. Learn more about how YOU can be a part of shaping a healthy, just world and sustainable future for all generations. And you'll have a chance to win up to \$12K in prizes including a scholarship, travel, and other awesome eco items!

## Quote

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead

## Action

Join an eco club on your campus, sign up to work with TTG's Freshman Green 15 or Project Green Challenge 2021 at [teensturninggreen.org](http://teensturninggreen.org) or [info@teensturninggreen.org](mailto:info@teensturninggreen.org).

## More Info

-  [How to start a movement](#)
-  [The Future of Social Activism](#)
-  [Join the Movement Pinterest Board](#)



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## Terms to Green Your Vocab

**Biodiversity:** the variety of life forms in a habitat, biome or planet; a measure of a healthy ecosystem.

**Collaborative Consumption:** a disruptive economic model based on sharing or swapping products in place of ownership or hyper consumption; reinventing what and how people interact with goods. (zipcar is a perfect example)

**Compostable:** organic material that decays and can be used as plant fertilizer or growing medium.

**Fair Trade:** labor or production of items that pays appropriate prices for materials, goods, and services – specifically to or from developing nations.

**GMO (genetically modified organisms):** genetically engineered plants or animals that are artificially modified through the gene splicing techniques of biotechnology. Look for the GMO Verified label on your product packaging to ensure no GMO ingredients.

**Greenwash:** to mislead or spread disinformation (by an individual, business or organization) as to present a falsely eco-friendly or environmentally responsible public image; often used as a consumer marketing strategy.

**Locavore:** one who chooses to eat food that is grown, raised, and produced locally to lessen environmental impact and conserve resources.

**Meatless Monday:** a global movement to reduce meat consumption on Mondays in order to improve personal health, reduce carbon footprints, and alleviate climate change.

**Natural:** existing in or caused by nature; a word that is entirely unregulated in usage.

**Post Consumer:** material that has been repurposed after one or more previous uses by consumers.

**Recycled/Recyclable:** made of reused materials / able to be converted into reusable materials.

**Ripple Effect:** the phenomena wherein an initial individual action expands to impact others and spur further positive action, mimicking the occurrence in water.

**Sustainable:** able to be upheld while maintaining balance and avoiding collateral damage or depletion of natural resources.

**Upcycle:** to turn waste materials into desirable, usable, quality objects; in line with the Cradle to Cradle philosophy.

**USDA Certified Organic:** indicates that plants or animals were raised without toxic herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics, growth hormones or synthetic chemicals; not genetically modified.

# 15

## Things to Take to College

### 1. Organic, Fair Trade and NonGMO Granola Bars

In order to perform well, both in school and in physical activities, it is necessary to treat your body well by fueling it with foods, beverages, and snacks that provide sustainable energy and nutrition. Organic, NonGMO, and Fair Trade foods do just that—ensuring a balanced approach to farming and eating.

### 2. Organic or Natural Deodorant

The majority of our cosmetics and personal care products contain synthetic ingredients that have never been tested for safety. Neither the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) nor any other governing body has approved most of the nearly 80,000 chemical ingredients used in the United States, making it impossible to know their impact on our bodies!

### 3. Stainless Steel Water Bottle

Bottled water is more expensive than tap water. Most municipal tap water costs under a penny a gallon, whereas bottled water weighs in around five cents an ounce. Get a BPA-free stainless steel or glass bottle and save your money. Tap water scare you? Most tap water is filtered more strictly than bottled water!

### 4. Energy Star Mini-Refrigerator

An energy-efficient mini fridge will help you stay under your allotted energy usage quota and give you a clear conscience that your chilled food isn't relying on a lot of fossil-fuel powered electricity. Make sure you buy an Energy-Star rated refrigerator!

### 5. Power Strip (Phantom Power)

We all use power strips to manage devices in our dorms, but even when a device is fully charged, if you leave it plugged in it may still consume electricity known as phantom power—small amounts of energy that are drawn from the grid even when devices are not in use. In the United States alone, phantom power costs consumers more than \$3 billion a year!

### 6. Recycled/Upcycled Backpack or Messenger Bag

The bag you choose to carry your books is a great opportunity to support producers and designers who act sustainably. Look for bags made from recycled or upcycled materials produced by companies that endorse fair trade practices. Purchasing one backpack may not seem like a big decision, but think about the enormous impact of students around the world purchasing backpacks!

## 7. Recycled Paper Products

Papermaking is the most resource-intensive and highly polluting of all manufacturing industries, requiring tremendous amounts of fiber, water, energy and toxic chemicals. The good news is that every ton of paper that is recycled saves 17 trees. Use less paper whenever possible, and when purchasing paper products choose ones made from post-consumer material.

## 8. Shower Shoes / Flip Flops

There are many companies out there who are taking old, discarded rubber materials and transforming them into upcycled flip-flops, perfect for the shower or getting around campus! Instead of using synthetic rubber that is produced from petroleum, you can reduce your carbon footprint in a pair of stylish recycled rubber flip-flops. Even flip-flops can contribute to your zero waste lifestyle!

## 9. Recycled Hangers

Everyone buys hangers for their college dorm, but who says they have to be made of plastic? Think about alternative materials when you buy and remember that all the plastic ever created still exists! It will never break down or degrade naturally. "Every day in the US an estimated 15.5 million plastic, wire and wood hangers are dumped into landfills!"

## 10. Desk Lamp with LED bulb

All light bulbs are not created equal! When you go to replace an old bulb remember that LED bulbs produce an equivalent amount of brightness as an incandescent bulb, for about a ¼ or less of the energy. This means they will save you money and last much longer!

## 11. Organic cotton bedding and towels

While comprising only 2.4% of the world's agricultural land, conventional cotton uses about 11% of the world's pesticides and close to 25% of the world's insecticides, making it among the most chemical intensive crops on the planet. It's been estimated that it takes nearly a third of a pound of pesticides to raise a pound of cotton!

## 12. Eco Laundry Detergent

When buying laundry essentials, choose products that won't expose you to potentially harmful chemicals. The U.S. government doesn't review the safety of cleaning products before they're sold and allows manufacturers to use almost any ingredient, including known carcinogens and other health-harming substances. Do your research and become an informed consumer. \*ewg.org

## 13. Bamboo Headphones or Ear-buds

Everyone loves to listen to their favorite tunes between classes or while working out, but why not make an eco statement at the same time? Quite a few great companies are making headphones and ear buds that incorporate recycled or sustainable materials (like bamboo) that don't sacrifice sound quality.

## 14. Reusable Bag

Next time you head to the super market and are asked "paper or plastic?" say neither! While paper is better than plastic since it can be recycled easily, there is no better option than a reusable bag. Plus reusable options come in lots of different designs and graphics to suit your personal style.

Check this video out [here](#).

## 15. Reusable Utensils

Eating on the go produces lots of waste. Single use plastic utensils might seem easier in the short term, but every spork you toss goes straight to the landfill, resulting in unnecessary waste that will never go away. A true measure of a meal's sustainability goes beyond the food itself, so keep a handy set of reusable utensils (sourced from eco-friendly materials like bamboo) in your bag for all your grab-and-go or takeout meals.