

A quick guide to greener shopping

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From manufacturing and transport to packaging and use, the everyday things we buy can have a significant impact on the environment. Choices you make when you go shopping can make a big difference.

1. Buy energy-efficient

To make long-term energy savings, keep an eye out for labelling schemes that identify energy-efficient products, from light bulbs to washing machines. Look for the Energy Saving Recommended logo and the European Union (EU) Energy label which rates products for energy efficiency from A (best) to G (worst).

2. Buy recycled

Look out for recycled products. Recycled paper, kitchen rolls and toilet tissue are among the products now widely available. Buying recyclable products, and recycling them, can also help.

3. Buy local - and in season

Whether it's flowers, meat, dairy, fruit or vegetables, buying locally in season and unprocessed or lightly processed food can reduce environmental impacts through reduced energy use.

4. Buy Fairtrade

You can buy fairly traded products in shops, cafes and off licences – look out for the FAIRTRADE Mark. This guarantees that the producers of the product are getting decent wages and a fair price for their goods, and goods are likely to have been produced with less impact on the environment.

5. Look for the labels

Look out for labels that show products have been made with respect for the environment. There are a number of reliable green labelling schemes, covering food, timber, clothing, appliances and much more.

6. Hold on to your phone

Hang on to your mobile phone for longer – they're designed to work for at least 10 years and you don't need to upgrade every year. When you do need to dispose of your phone, recycle it.

This information is largely taken from the following UK Government website (where you'll also find extra info):

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving>

7. Concentrate on the carton

Buying in bulk and using concentrated cleaning products means you'll use less packaging, reducing the amount you throw away.

8. Be a borrower

Sometimes, items don't get used enough to justify buying them – the average drill, for example, is used for about 15 minutes in its lifetime. Hiring things you don't often use or borrowing them from a friend or neighbour saves the materials and energy that go into making all those unloved gadgets gathering dust in your shed.

9. Repair and reuse

Where possible, think about repairing something rather than replacing it, and buying things you can reuse, rather than disposable versions.

10. Take a bag

Hang on to your shopping bags and take some with you when you next go to the supermarket.

11. If you can't find it, ask!

You are the customer, so ask for what you want. If you are looking for greener products, or want to know about how something was made and can't find the information you need, ask the retailer or manufacturer - and keep asking if you have to. If more people ask, retailers are more likely to start stocking greener products and providing the information you want.