

It's Not Easy Being Green

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To borrow Kermit the Frog's lament: "it's not easy being green". Though he was probably making a statement about being happy with who he is, we can take the same expression today and apply it to conservation. With global warming, water shortages, increased fuel costs and higher prices (especially on products and services that depend on fuel to bring them to us), we are encouraged to go green. Conserve, simplify, and recycle. That's the trend. Frugality is suddenly popular and in style.

*Eat it up,
Wear it out,
Make it do,
Or do without.*

That rhyme has been around forever. What does it mean? Do you subscribe to it?

Eat it up – This is not an excuse to become obese! More like the sign at an all-you-can-eat buffet: "take what you eat; eat what you take". If you prepare several servings at one time, which is also a good time and energy saver, but you don't want to eat the same thing more than twice in a row, be prepared to freeze the other portions.

Also, a saver in that you won't be tempted to buy fast food (on the most hectic evenings) because you have your own "fast food" at home in your freezer. For the freezer portions, store in well-washed plastic containers from butter, margarine, yogurt, cottage cheese; it's not necessary to buy special containers.

Use it up (variation on the above) – Do you use the 3/8" of lipstick in the bottom of the tube? Scoop it out with a tiny plastic spatula or use a brush. It's just as good as the first inch of lipstick that dispenses itself! If you wear pantyhose under slacks, use the ones that have runs but aren't yet falling apart. Have several boxes of cereal or cookies open at one time and invariably one or more gets stale or starts to attract bugs? Instead, have only one or two open at a time and use them before opening another one. Consider whether buying in bulk (the giant economy size) is always the best choice. If you're wasting more of the product than you're using because it gets old or goes out of date, it may not be cost effective.

Wear it out – How much use do you get from your household items? Clothes, linens, towels, appliances, carpeting,

furniture, decorations, etc. When buying new things, think of it like a marriage. Consider your purchases carefully; the bigger the ticket item, the longer the commitment. With that in mind, it may make sense to purchase, for example, the larger (and likely more expensive) washer and dryer if your family is large, as it may hold up better than the smaller or less sophisticated models. And it will certainly save energy by allowing you to run larger loads.

Make it do – Before going shopping, take inventory: Do you already own something that would work - fill the gap you think is necessary to fill? Can you eke one more semester

out of that notebook, another month out of those shoes, another season out of that winter coat? Likewise, before going grocery shopping, take inventory. Storage always being an issue, how much of the staples (pasta, canned goods, baking supplies, etc.) that you use do you need to have on hand at any given time? Again, the giant "economy size" may not be the best choice for your size family.



Or do without – This is not a suggestion to live with scarcity. On the contrary. Consider all the abundance in your life. Make a list of all the items you do NOT buy but seem to have lots and lots of. Some examples are rubber bands, calendars, wire hangers, plant pots, gift wrap/bags, ball point pens, plastic bags. You get the idea. When replacing something, decide whether it must be replaced or if by letting go of it, it will simplify your life. Stuff takes up space and energy. It may be time to let go—if it's worn out, it's giving you permission to do that! If it's not worn out, recycle it ("give it away") to an organization or individual who would be delighted to receive it.

If thriftiness is an unfamiliar skill to you, rest assured it can be learned.

Do it for yourself – to boost your savings, to assert control over your expenses.

Do it for the environment – to recycle and not waste precious resources.

Do it to be politically correct – to reduce your carbon footprint.

It's not easy being green, but, like Kermit, it can become who you are, too.