

Sustainable Living Basics



A Starter Guide

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Abstract

It would be an understatement to say we talk a lot about sustainable living here!

But what does that phrase actually mean?

Sustainable living is a practical philosophy that aims to reduce personal and societal environmental impact by making positive changes which counteract climate change and other negative environmental concerns.

More simply, sustainable living is a method of reducing one's "carbon footprint". If you need motivation to jump on board, try out the World Wildlife Fund's environmental footprint calculator.

"Sustainable living" encourages people to minimize their use of Earth's resources and reduce the damage of human and environmental interactions.

Let's first look at the more complex ethos behind sustainable living, before moving on to the practical side of sustainable living and how you can start.



Getting Started

Below, we've compiled some simple choices and changes you can start today that will have a lasting benefit to our planet.

I. What Is Sustainable Living?

For each and every person to share a vision that involves experiencing a healthy and happy life within the fair utilization of earth's resources while allowing space for the wilderness as well as wildlife, people have to adopt the principles of sustainable living. In other words, it must involve ways of living that advance good health and well-being while limiting the destruction of the natural environment and wildlife.



Sustainable living is based on four main pillars namely minimizing waste, limiting the use of Earth's natural resources, the wise use of the environment, and ensuring quality working/living environments. The following are the guiding principles that can be used as an initiative to make sustainable and stable living a reality.

Sustainability is about ecology, economy and equity.

~ Ralph Bicknese

THE GOAL OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

In more complex terms, sustainable living aims to achieve an environmental equilibrium. This is sometimes called "net zero living" or striking a "zero energy balance" with the Earth.

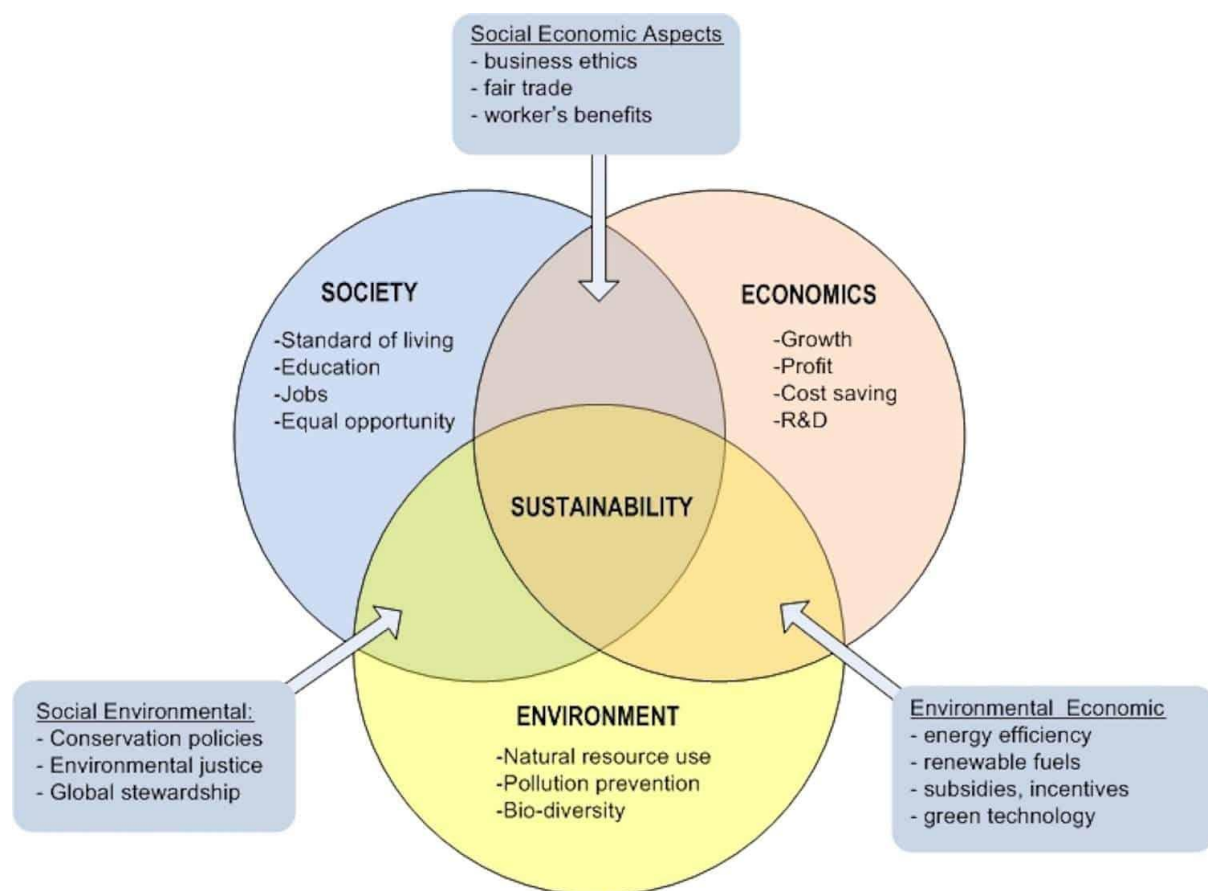
In other words, return to the earth whatever you take from it.

Obviously, this is sustainability in its ideal form.

None of us will ever be able to truly achieve zero environmental impact. Which is why sustainability in its most broad sense also refers to how achievable that end is.

This is somewhat explained by the three pillars of sustainability illustrated by the venn diagram above from Penn State University. On the outside, we have the big three components: environmental, social, and economic.

All three are connected by their subcircles and converging in the center of it all is true sustainability.



PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

1. Effective land use and wildlife protection

This principle requires people to realize the need for effective land use and wildlife protection. The aim of the principle is to aid in creating new habitats and restoring biodiversity through effective land use and incorporating the practices in our surrounding environments.

As the custodians of the planet's natural environment, wise actions with regards to proper land use and wildlife protection are vital in embracing sustainable living.

2. Sustainable water usage

The requirement for the efficient use of water in farms, construction, and manufacturing is part of sustainable living principles. The principle emphasizes on the need to advance good water utilization practices by designing water management systems that can deal with issues such as flooding, water wastage, and protection of water sources from pollution or destruction.

3. Supporting local and organic foods

Sustainable farming is one of the vital principles of sustainable living. The principal insists on humane and sustainable farming by encouraging the availability of healthy, local, organic, low impact, and seasonal diets.

Food wastage is also highly discouraged. For this reason, people need to support local farming and organically grown products by buying local and eating organic foodstuffs.

4. The use of sustainable materials

Sustainable materials refer to healthy, efficient, and durable products. Examples include materials that are locally sourced, manufactured from waste or renewable resources, and those with low embodied energy.

5. The use of sustainable transport

Promoting the use of low and zero-carbon transport mechanisms is one of the overriding principles of sustainable living. It encompasses the need to reduce travel and accepting green transport services such as electric trains and cars and walking or cycling as an alternative to driving high emission vehicles.

6. Zero waste and zero carbon

According to this sustainable living principle, every little thing done should focus on reducing the waste to the landfills. Only buying and consuming the needed staff is essential.

Priority should be given on quality and not quantity to achieve this goal. People also need to find the easiest ways of using efficient and renewable technology.

7. Creating own healthy environment

This involves indulging in active and meaningful life activities to promote good health and well being. Fun, healthy, and less stressful living can be achieved by fun activities such as biking, hiking, walking, sailing, and skiing.

8. Realize local cultural values

Culture has easy and effective ways of preserving and enhancing the local environment. For instance, local cultures stress conservation, minimizing wastage, and the use of local materials and organic products.

Thus, reviving and respecting the local culture, identity, and knowledge contributes to the progress of people's involvement in environmentally friendly practices and bringing into existence a new culture of sustainability.

BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Sustainable living comes with numerous benefits. Not only does it limit the impacts on the natural environment, but it also redefines our lifestyles with a promise of good health and reduced cost of living. Here are the top benefits of assuming a sustainable lifestyle.



1. Health benefits

Living a sustainable lifestyle is a sure way of attaining increased fitness and improved life balance. The health benefits are attributed to little dependence on vehicles or machinery and the consumption of quality food products that is either locally or organically produced.

With little dependence on vehicles or the use of machinery; biking, walking, and doing tasks manually can help one keep fit throughout. Because sustainable living embraces natural lighting and the appreciation of nature, it can also enhance happiness and lessen depression. Consumption of quality and non-toxic food products equally promotes good health.

2. Better and more stable planet for future generations

The most important reason for making a decision to live sustainably is to simply safeguard the environment. It means ensuring its stability and existence for future generations.

Utilizing the sun's energy, reducing environmental footprint, use of non-toxic materials, and effectively using the planet's resources will ensure the environment is stable and able to support the current generations as well as generations to come in the future.

3. Cost savings

More and more people are looking for simple ways to cut living costs. Well, sustainable living is the surest way of cutting back on living costs because it entails reducing the earth's natural resource consumption.

For instance, sustainable homes promise reduced costs of water consumption, heating, and lighting through the implementation of water-saving techniques, use of green energy, and smart lighting solutions respectively.

4. Maximizing energy and water efficiency

The use of passive ventilation systems, passive solar design, water recycling techniques, rainwater harvesting, and waste management will ensure the maximization of energy and water efficiency. This benefit guarantees comfortable homes with reduced utility bills and resource wastage.

5. Sustainable and durable products

A sustainable lifestyle entails purchasing and using products that are green, durable, and sufficient. Furniture products crafted from Bamboo are good examples as they are entirely sufficient and last even longer.

Besides, unlike timber, bamboo doesn't release stored CO₂. Other sustainable, durable, and affordable materials are those crafted from recycled products or waste matter. Aside from their sufficiency and durability, they also help the environment.



II. History of sustainability

Today's sustainable living advocates often cite the seminal 1962 book *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson, an American marine biologist, naturalist and environmentalist, for rousing modern-day interest in sustainability. The book explored the adverse effects of fertilizers and pesticides on wildlife and challenged the practice of unchecked marketing claims by large corporations.

In the early 1980s, the United Nations formed the World Commission on Environment and Development with the goal of "uniting countries to work together to pursue sustainable development." It released *Our Common Future* in 1987, a report which succeeded in popularizing the notion of sustainable living with the public, and local and state governments around the world started introducing sustainability policies focused on recycling and renewable energies.

In 2015, the UN also spearheaded the Paris Agreement, a legally binding treaty between global leaders aimed at reducing climate change. Today the United Nations continues to champion sustainability through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainability is now a guiding principle for a wide range of governmental agencies, corporations and other institutions.

III. The 5 R's of Sustainability

The 5 R's are a great tool to help us be more mindful of our environmental impact and in particular to ultimately reduce the waste of resources and money.

Every item we use has an environmental cost, some greater than others. By managing our waste in accordance with the 5 Rs, we can all make a difference by being mindful of the waste we generate.

According to Bea Johnson of Zero Waste Home, the 5 Rs of zero waste are:

- Refuse
- Reduce
- Reuse (and repair)
- Recycle
- Rot



1. Refuse

Every purchasing choice you make is a vote for the world you want. Think carefully about the environmental impacts of your actions. The first of the 5 Rs is to refuse. Start refusing things you don't need and say no to items you haven't asked for. For example:

- Freebies and collectables: The Coles Little Shop promotion is a great example of this. How many of you were given those little plastic collectables without acknowledging you wanted to receive them? How such a wasteful and arguably unethical campaign could run during

Plastic Free July and just after the single use plastic bag ban commenced is a whole other blog post!

- Produce wrapped in plastic: Opt for produce that isn't pre packaged in plastic or netting and send a message to the supermarkets who dictate these packaging requirements to farmers. If farms refuse, the supermarket can simply switch suppliers, leaving them in significant financial peril. Choose naked fruit and veggies and further support our farmers by shopping at greengrocers, farmers markets, local food co-ops (like Food Connect) or direct from the farm. Use reusable produce bags for bulk items.
- Business cards and flyers: Use your phone to take a photo instead.
- Straws: If you don't need a straw, tell the person behind the counter not to put one in your drink. Biome also sells a huge range of reusable straw options.
- Plastic shopping bags: Whether you're at a supermarket or a clothing store, can you pop your items in a reusable shopping bag, handbag or just carry them instead?

2. Reduce

The second of the 5 Rs is to reduce. Review your lifestyle and find ways to reduce your consumption and save resources. Be mindful about your actions and realistic about your purchases. Buy quality products that will last a lifetime and start taking action to reduce daily waste. These ideas might help:

- Reduce the amount of plastic products you purchase: Opt for package free, compostable and recyclable alternatives, like bamboo cotton buds, plant based scrub brushes, bamboo toothbrushes, bar soap, and skin care in reusable glass jars and bottles.
- Reduce the amount of clothes you buy and buy quality: Understand where your clothes come from, who made them, how they were made and what they're made of. Perhaps you'd like to consider capsule wardrobe made up of only slow fashion items, buying only second hand, or a no new clothes challenge?
- Opt for multipurpose products: Do we really need a specialised product for everything? Vinegar can be used to clean glass, as a general cleaner, as a fabric softener and to neutralise odours. Oils and clays can be use to cleanse, moisturise and treat both skin and hair. Reusable beeswax wraps can be used to cover bowls, wrap sandwiches or folded into a pouch to store snacks.

3. Reuse (and repair)

The third of the 5 Rs is to reuse (and repair). Start reusing and repairing items instead of buying brand new. Swap single use items with reusables and save money and waste by mending broken items or find a new purpose for items that cannot be repaired.

Start with the 'Big Six': Find yourself a reusable water bottle, reusable straw (or no straw), reusable coffee cup (KeepCup), reusable shopping bags, reusable produce bags, and reusable food wraps or pouches (like vegan or beeswax wraps).

4. Recycle

The fourth of the 5 Rs is to recycle. Maintain a closed loop system by recycling as much as you can. Use external recycling facilities that accept hard to recycle items that cannot be recycled by your curbside collection program, such as light bulbs, batteries, electronics and soft plastics.

5. Rot

And the final step in the 5 Rs of zero waste is to rot (compost). Composting your food scraps not only provides you with nutrient rich fertiliser for your garden, it also helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions produced by landfill. Instead of discarding food scraps in the general waste bin, add them to a compost heap, Bokashi bin or worm farm.

IV. Why Is Sustainable Living Important?

Living a more sustainable life is better for the health of the planet and all the living things that inhabit it, including humans.

To live sustainably we need to find practical ways to reduce our impact on the environment.

As a local government with responsibilities to our community, we have implemented strategies to:

- reduce energy use
- move to alternative green sources of power
- reduce waste
- increase recycling
- create a more water resilient city
- green our city by:
 - ✓ increasing our urban tree canopy

- ✓ protecting and restoring our environment.

Learn more about how we are creating a sustainable city and how you can get involved.

Creating a greener home is easier than you think. Small changes can make a difference to our environment and save you money. Discover tips and programs that can help you live more sustainably.

Greening our city "Gold Coast"

Our native wildlife and natural environments are among our most critical assets, essential to the future social, economic and environmental sustainability of the Gold Coast. It is critical that we protect and restore nature across the city.

We are greening our city by protecting and restoring our natural areas and waterways as well as increasing our urban tree canopy.

Natural City Strategy

We are striving to protect our natural environment as well as our economy and lifestyle through our Natural City Strategy.

One of our priorities is to ensure we live in balance with nature. Building on the existing initiatives such as our City Plan, the strategy focuses on protecting places for nature and partnering with the community to secure and enhance our natural assets.

Active travel

We encourage Gold Coast residents and visitors to choose more sustainable methods of travel. Check below for tips and tools to help make active travel your new normal.

V. Simple Ways To Start Living A More Sustainable Lifestyle In Gold Coast

1. Start small — but start now.

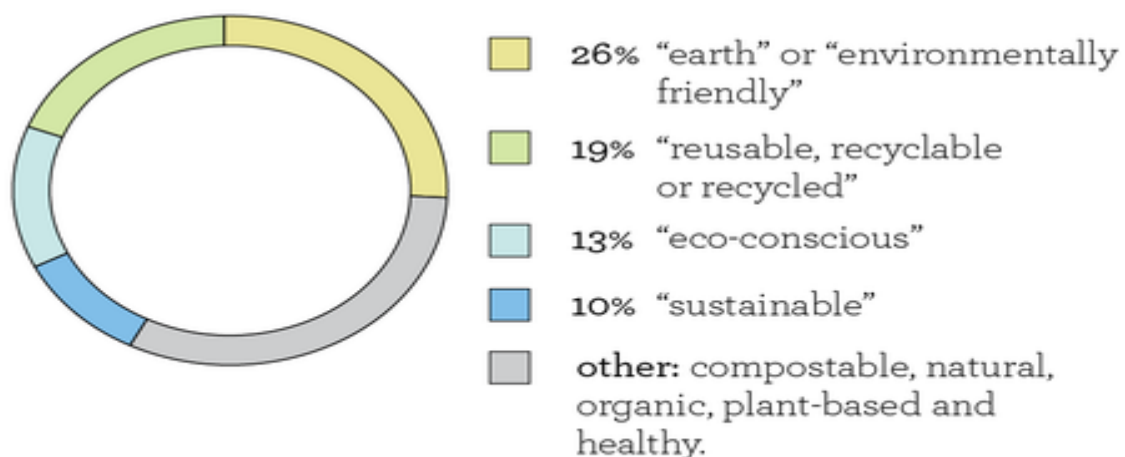
One of the most important things to remember as you are transitioning into more sustainable living is little changes add up. And they can add up fast. So don't feel you have to overhaul everything all at once. Start with easy tweaks like switching to energy-saving light bulbs or drinking tap water instead of bottled (our environmental experts have assessed a wide range of water-testing kits to help boost your confidence), buying less overall, and being

conscious about how you dispose of goods, from mattresses to clothing and beyond.

2. Get savvy about spotting greenwashing.

Even today, as people are more interested in sustainable living tips, "eco" or "green" claims can be confusing. When we put the question to over 5,000 people in the Good Housekeeping Institute's recent Sustainability Survey, 26% of people said they believed "green" meant "earth or environmentally friendly," 19% answered "reusable, recyclable or recycled," 13% said "eco-conscious" and 10% thought it meant "sustainable." Other write-in answers included: natural, organic, compostable, plant-based and healthy.

In our Good Housekeeping Institute's Sustainability Survey we polled 5,000 people to define the meaning of "green":



In reality, all of these things might contribute to making a product more "green" or "sustainable," but according to the FTC Green Guides, brands must explain why a product is green before they can legitimately use eco-friendly claims on their labels. Once you can easily ID the terms and claims – and spot the imposters – you will be better equipped to make truly sustainable choices.

3. Rethink your modes of transportation.

Walking, taking the stairs and riding a commuter bicycle are some of the easiest ways to get around more sustainably. That's because they require no energy (other than your own!) and emit absolutely zero greenhouse gases

while helping to boost your own cardiovascular health. Driving a combustion-engine vehicle, on the other hand, is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

If distance puts walking or riding a bike out of the question, public transportation or car-sharing are good alternatives along with e-bikes and scooters. If you don't have your own bike, consider the growing number of rent-a-bike services popping up in more neighborhoods all over the country. If that's not an option for you, fortunately, most car manufacturers are making bold predictions about adding electric and hybrid vehicles to their rosters.

VI. How To Make More Sustainable Choices When Shopping For A New Home?



1. Ditch single-use bags and bottles.

One of the biggest contributors to the global waste epidemic is plastic pollution. When you consider that Our World in Data estimates 381 million tons of plastic was produced in 2015, it's no surprise that this amount — the equivalent to roughly two-thirds of the world population — is wreaking havoc on the health of global wildlife and our planet's oceans and marine life.

The good news news reusable is becoming a much more common personal choice and is also being mandated by municipalities around the globe through plastic bag bans and more.

2. Learn about ethical fashion.

While the fashion industry has been the target of intense scrutiny by sustainability advocates, examples of sustainable living can be found. It's important to remember truly sustainable fashion (also called "ethical" or "slow" fashion) takes into account an item's full life cycle, including sourcing, shipping and end of life, as well as the people and resources it affects.

That said, our pros suggest buying secondhand whenever possible (and selling your unwanted clothes online). Since the ultimate goal is to produce less and use things longer, the most sustainable fashion is anything pre-owned.

3. Buy from truly sustainable brands and companies.

"Corporate sustainability is thought to have three pillars: people, planet and profit," says Aral. "For any business, this means ensuring the health of employees (and people related to that business) and minimizing or even reversing its environmental impacts should be just as important as turning a profit, for it to be sustainable in the long run."

So do your research when seeking out products and brands that are committed to sustainable practice by looking for brands that promote specific sustainable practices including reducing water and hazardous chemicals used in production or use of recycled materials or sustainable fibers such as organic cotton. You can also look for sustainable and recycled materials, and trusted third-party emblems like EcoCert Cosmos for organic cosmetics, Fair Trade Certified ingredients or GreenGuard Certified products.

4. Shop organic when you can.

Opting for organic clothing and bedding is a great step toward sustainability. Why? "GOTS certified organic fabrics follow strict environmental standards throughout the entire production process," according to GH Institute Textiles Director Lexie Sachs. "For starters, organic cotton and other natural fibers are grown using less water and without pesticides and other potentially harmful treatments. Then the rest of the manufacturing steps – from the dyes and finishes to the ethical conditions at factories – must also comply with specific criteria."

5. Look for sustainable packaging.

Packaging is generally defined as the products used to wrap or protect goods, including food and drink, and home and personal care items. It covers

everything from culinary containers and detergent bottles to packaging for beauty products and all those delivery boxes.

Choosing sustainable packaging is one way to offset the massive waste in landfills. But sustainable packaging can also help the planet in other, less expected ways. For example a moisturizer that uses less packaging is lighter to transport, which means fewer greenhouse gases are released on its journey from the manufacturing facility to its final destination in your bathroom. That's also why the experts in the Good Housekeeping Institute introduced our Sustainable Packaging and Sustainable Innovation Awards, which recognize products that use minimal packaging materials and practices.

VII. How To Make Your Move Eco-Friendly?



Moving household belongings from one place to another is often tedious and stressful. The process requires attention-to-detail planning, proper packing supplies and great moving strategies.

While you are busy collecting bubble wrap and corrugated boxes for your items, you may not realise that this can affect the environment. According to the Australian Environment Protection Agency, transportation is one of the country's major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change, global warming, and air and water pollution are key signs of environmental impact. Plus, using plastic-based packing materials and boxes increases plastic waste and causes harm to the environment. Therefore, making small changes and making your move eco-friendly is important.

It is good to make smart decisions, even hiring trained removalists Gold Coast and reducing carbon footprint.

Here are some great tips and tricks to help you relocate sustainably:

1. Plan Your Move In Advance

Making your move eco-friendly is a big decision because you must ditch traditional packing and relocation strategies and adopt sustainable ones. So, prepare your mind and plan things ahead of time to reduce unnecessary waste. Look for options that can protect the environment or minimise plastic bags.

For instance: You may toss your old clothes, towels or other items. But, if you think wisely, you can use these things to pack your knickknacks and reduce paper and plastic packing materials.

2. Host A Garage Sale

This is also one of the best ways to eliminate items you no longer need. Selling at a discounted price can also help you earn extra money and reduce the moving load.

Organising a garage sale at least 2-3 weeks before the move is good. So, plan ahead and reduce waste when moving a house.

3. Donate Pre-Loved Items You No Longer Need

De-cluttering is one of the crucial steps that can help you reduce the entire moving load. You can get rid of unnecessary items, and donating to the local charity is one of the best ways to help underprivileged people and protect the environment.

Instead of adding waste to the landfill, you can donate pre-loved items to disadvantaged people. Give your unused clothes, old furniture, books, dishes, old bed linens and much more.

Make sure all are in good condition.

4. Use Old Clothes And Towels To Wrap Fragile Items

There is no denying that bubble wrap, packing paper and other plastic materials; use old clothes, towels and blankets to pack your fragile items.

Wrap your plasma TV, lamps, dishes, and other delicate items in clothes to add extra protection during lifting, loading, and transportation.

This will save you money on packing materials and reduce plastic waste- which is good for the environment.

You can also ask removalists Gold Coast to bring biodegradable packing products for safe and sound removals.

5. Get Reusable Packing Boxes

Instead of buying corrugated moving boxes, you can reduce your carbon footprint by getting reusable boxes from grocery stores, liquor shops, bookstores, Facebook marketplaces and recycling centres.

This will reduce landfill waste and also save you a lot of money. You can also rent reusable boxes to pack your delicate household items. Many renowned companies offer pick-up and drop-off services once you are done with the boxes.

6. Utilise Storage Units For Your Belongings

Reduce the need for corrugated boxes by using portable storage items. Leave clothes in the dresser or pack bed linens in a suitcase. You can also pack your books and other supplies in desk drawers and containers and save the planet.

You can also make your new home energy efficient by reducing utility and water consumption.

7. Consciously Toss Unwanted Food

A lot of food gets wasted during the moving process. You don't need to toss everything. Instead, you can donate sauces, oil and canned foods to local shelters on the Gold Coast.

Pack these food items and look for reliable charity organisations where you can easily donate such stuff.

8. Look For Recycling Options

You can't overlook the accumulated trash when preparing a house for a relocation. You might have bottles of household cleaners, empty shampoo

bottles, canes and other plastic waste. Throwing everything into the landfill leaves a carbon footprint and pollutes the environment.

So, think wisely and recycle your household belongings. For instance:

- ✓ Find the best recycling centre for paper waste
- ✓ Recycle your old electronic devices, such as mobile phones, computer, DVD player and much more.
- ✓ Search for local recycling centres.

9. Hire An Eco-Friendly Moving Company

It is always good to let professional Gold Coast removalists handle your much-loved possessions throughout the process. If you have decided to hire a company, research and look for eco-friendly or green options.

Many responsible and reliable companies practice sustainable moving habits to save the environment and keep your items intact. They even use green moving trucks to reduce pollution.

Tip: You can also opt for the backloading option if you have only furniture or fewer items to relocate.

Sustainable moving requires proper planning, patience and a creative approach. These tips will help you go green while packing and relocating your household belongings.

VIII. How To Live More Sustainably At New Home

Every day we make choices in our lives that affect the environment, the climate and other species. From what we eat to how many children we decide to have, there's a lot we can do to "choose wild" and reduce our environmental footprint to leave more room for wild animals and plants.

- ✓ Think twice before shopping.
- ✓ Make sure your big purchases have big environmental benefits.
- ✓ Go #PlasticFree.
- ✓ Boycott products that endanger wildlife.
- ✓ Pay attention to labels.
- ✓ Be water wise.
- ✓ Drive less, drive green.
- ✓ Green your home.
- ✓ Choose Wild Energy.
- ✓ Take Extinction Off Your Plate.

- ✓ Choose to have a smaller family.
- ✓ Use your voice and your vote.

Final Thoughts on Sustainable Living

Sustainable living, and all its working parts, mean much more than saving the planet. Sustainable actions, choices, and behaviors positively contribute to your lifestyle, home, and community. A sustainable community - and the world - is one that supports itself and its natural surroundings, and encourages both human and environmental health.

But as this pdf proves, sustainable living is not a perfect system and will look different for everyone. When exploring new ways to reduce our consumption and waste, and live sustainably and ethically within our means, there's always room for improvement!

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