



# Respecting the Earth: Ten How To's

The following information gives details on the “deeds of respect” listed in your textbook. You might use this information to take a look at your current practices and plan for new practices that care for the earth.

## 1. Save Energy and Natural Resources

Walking, taking the bus, biking, or car pooling are major ways to save gasoline and oil, which are derived from fossil fuels. If you drive, use a gas-efficient car with pollution controls.

Likewise, keep your electricity use down. Put on a sweater in winter rather than turn up the heat. And make sure your home is well insulated. Try the cooling effect of fans and ice water in summer, instead of air-conditioning. Take shorter showers, thus using less water and less energy to heat the water.

## 2. Sort Trash and Recycle

The challenge of figuring out what to do with all the trash we North Americans pile up has spurred the recycling movement. Newspaper and other paper, aluminum, glass, tin cans, and some plastics can be reprocessed and used again but *only if they are set aside to be recycled*. It takes a little effort to separate trash, but it makes you feel productive, not wasteful. The ideal recycling effort is a community-wide program, with home pickup. In the absence of that, you can take these materials to a recycling collection point or to a local dealer who buys and sells them. Think about the possibilities:

- For every 115 pounds of newsprint recycled, a mature tree remains standing.
- Every glass bottle recycled saves enough energy to light a 100-watt bulb for four hours.
- The energy saved by recycling one aluminum can could keep a 100-watt light bulb burning for three and a half hours.

## 3. Avoid Disposables

So much of what we buy we throw away. Cut down on products that have a lot of packaging or that are meant to be used once or a few times, then discarded. Although some plastics can be recycled into new products, many cannot. Not only are plastics made from petroleum—a fossil fuel—but they biodegrade slowly. For example, a plastic bag will not decompose for ten to twenty years. Styrofoam will *never* decompose, and when burned it gives off toxic fumes. Although using paper products (plates, cups, fast-food containers, bags, and so on) is probably better than using plastic or Styrofoam, widespread use of paper products rapidly depletes forests. Best of all, use plates, cups, and silverware that you wash and use again.

## 4. Plant a Garden

Growing your own vegetables puts you in touch with the earth. You can learn firsthand how to care for plants and enrich soil with organic materials so that it supports other organisms. The taste and nutritional difference between foods grown in rich soil and foods grown in soil weakened by chemical use is remarkable.



## 5. Plant a Tree

Planting trees—even planting thousands of seedlings as a group project—has become a favored way for people who love the earth to restore some of the forest that is disappearing from our planet. Tropical forests, where half of the earth's plant and animal species live, are being destroyed at a rate of an area of one football field per second. Hardwood forests in North America and other nontropical areas are also being destroyed at an alarming rate—by development of land for industrial and commercial purposes, by pollution (acid rain), and by an enormous demand for paper.

## 6. Substitute for Aerosols

Aerosol sprays are a major culprit in the destruction of the ozone layer in the atmosphere. Scientists have found holes in the ozone shield that protects all life on earth from an overdose of the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. Replace aerosol cans with manual spray-pump containers, which can also be refilled and reused.

## 7. Join Group Projects

You might join with other concerned students to start a schoolwide effort to recycle used paper that otherwise would be thrown out. Or a group might develop a campaign to encourage people at your school to carpool or to use some means of transportation other than cars.

## 8. Write to Representatives

Let your government representatives know how you stand on issues that affect the earth—recycling laws, antipollution laws, irresponsible commercial and industrial development, a nuclear weapons test ban treaty, the generation and disposal of nuclear and other toxic wastes, and so on.

## 9. Live *More with Less*

Become comfortable with the idea that bigger or faster is not necessarily better and that life can actually become richer when we scale down our need for possessions. The phrase “living more with less” has a Reign-of-God ring to it.

## 10. Pray for Creation

As you would pray for someone you love, pray for the needs of the earth. Pray especially that human actions become more cooperative with the earth's processes.

