

Reducing Your Ecological Footprint

Energy consumption is a key area worth analyzing and reducing. Leaving lights on, keeping the heat up higher than necessary, leaving various electrical appliances on when not being used are just three of many examples of energy wasting. The use of lower wattage and/or energy efficient bulbs should also be encouraged. Water consumption can also be reduced. Turning off the tap when brushing your teeth, having showers instead of baths, replacing the shower head with a low-flow shower head, having shorter showers, installing a toilet dam in the tank to reduce the volume of water that is used with each flush, and watering gardens and lawns at night to avoid effects of evaporation are all simple but highly effective ideas. Through education programs either within the home or at school, people should be made aware of their energy and water consumption and given easy tasks for everyone to complete in order to reduce this consumption.



Recycling efforts should be maximized. Many communities in southwestern Ontario have recycling programs in effect. If certain municipalities do not yet have a good program, then citizens should get after their government to implement such a program. If one already exists, every citizen should learn the proper procedures and acceptable materials and make sure to sort their waste before putting it out for pickup. This is not a major task for any one person to complete each day but if everyone does a little, then a great deal can be accomplished.

Also not to be forgotten is the third “R” in environmentally friendly thinking: reusing. Everyone should make sure to reuse grocery bags either for when you make the next shopping trip or for collecting garbage around the house. Many things that no longer work in their original intended use can be dismantled and its parts used elsewhere. Election signs, for example, have several uses after the election day. The stake can be used to support garden plants, the plastic weatherproofing bag can be used to collect garbage in, and the sign can be turned over and used as scrap paper for messages. Simple innovations such as these can greatly reduce the impact we have on our environment.

A barrier that might impede one’s attempt in reducing their Ecological Footprint is necessity. Sometimes it is simply impossible or very impractical to carry out an activity in a more environmentally friendly manner. Driving with only one occupant, for example, sometimes is unavoidable depending on the time of day and routes needed to be travelled to reach the desired destination.

A barrier that might impede one’s efforts to reduce energy consumption is climate. Admittedly most Canadians could reduce their energy consumption by wearing an extra sweater and using blankets more often but this can only be taken so far. Canada’s winters can be extremely harsh and heat is a rather basic necessity.

Clearly there have been modest improvements in environmental awareness over the last decade. Education must continue, however strategies for reducing our negative impact on our environment must be more satisfactorily implemented. More research involving environmental experts and members of the community is required. Through more public awareness and programs at all levels, in all areas, the human race’s Ecological Footprint could be further reduced.

In six groups, draw for one of the categories used to calculate your Ecological Footprint (transportation, water use, clothing, recreation, food, and garbage) and prepare a poster illustrating how individuals can reduce their footprint in that category.