

49 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth

By Matt Neuman

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(The author wishes to thank his wife for suggesting he "get up and do something" to save the earth. This book is dedicated to her.)

1. TURN OFF THE LIGHTS.

Even if you're only going out of the room for a few minutes. Those kilowatts add up. (My wife groans when I say it, but, "It makes cents—with a c.")

2. UNPLUG APPLIANCES WHEN NOT IN USE.

Some of them, with their complicated timers and instant start-up features, constantly consume small amounts of electricity. ("Even the TV?" my wife asks. "Good thinking," I tell her.)

3. SEPARATE YOUR GARBAGE.

At our house we have separate garbage cans for glass, paper, plastic, aluminum, wood, organic matter, natural fabrics, synthetic fabrics, and rubber. (We split the work—my wife does the separating, I drop everything off at the recycling center.)

4. USE LESS WATER.

We have *two* bricks in our toilet tank. But there's a much simpler way to save water: *Don't flush every time!* ("Don't take the sports section in there with you!" is my wife's tip. A sense of humor is *so* important.)

5. DON'T MOW THE LAWN.

Let it grow. Naturally. Like a meadow. ("Like a *dump!*" jokes my wife.)

6. DON'T SHAVE AS OFTEN.

I shave once a week. ("If it's good enough for Don Johnson," I quip. "That was *passé years ago*," my wife informs me.)

7. DRIVE SLOWER.

I try to maintain a nice, steady 40 miles per hour, the legal minimum on most highways. Also, I roll up the windows. It reduces wind resistance -- and noise. ("You can't hear those horns?" my wife asks, incredulous.)

8. SHOP WITH A RE-USABLE SHOPPING BAG.

And, if you can, walk to the store. ("It'll do wonders for your figure," I mention casually to the missus.)

9. BOYCOTT!

Boycott polluters, or anyone who sells any product that can cause pollution, or any product that might contain an *ingredient* that can cause pollution. ("What does that leave?" my wife asks. "Just the good stuff," I reply.)

10. DO YOUR LAUNDRY BY HAND.

It may be drudgery of the lowest order to have to hand-laundry your clothes and hang them on a clothesline, but it saves water and energy. ("Whistle while you work," I kid my wife. "Hitler is a jerk," she continues. I'd forgotten that verse!)

11. TURN DOWN THE HEAT.

Especially the water heater. ("They take cold showers in Sweden," I like to hint. "Go to Sweden!"—my wife.)

12. TAKE FEWER SHOWERS.

But don't share them, even if it's been touted, albeit humorously, in other "x-number-of-simple-things-you-can-do-to-save-the-earth" books. Why? It uses *more* water. Figure it out for yourself. Better would be to take a bath in "recycled" bath water. Best: An occasional sponge bath. ("No, I'm *not* kidding," I tell the wife.)

13. REPLACE METAL DOORKNOBS.

During the winter, when it's very dry, touch a metal doorknob and you get a little shock from the static electricity. That's *wasted* electricity, I figure. We've replaced all our metal doorknobs with ones made of non-conducting rubber, wood or glass. ("You've got a screw loose," my wife points out. And she's right!)

14. GO SOLAR.

For a small investment of about ten thousand dollars you can convert your house to solar energy. It'll pay for itself in twenty years, I estimate. ("What next?" my wife wonders, as we all do.)

15. MOUNT A WINDMILL ON YOUR ROOF.

It's cheap—about eight hundred dollars—and easy to install. ("A little more to the right," I yell up to her.)

16. MAKE YOUR OWN HONEY.

In addition to producing delicious honey, our beehive is a real conversation starter. ("We have to talk," my wife says. See?)

17. WORK AT HOME.

Recently, I quit my job of twenty years to become a full-time writer. I write at home, on a computer. I'm not using up any gasoline or motor oil, I'm not wearing out any clothing or shoes. To put it simply: I'm not a drain on the environment. ("You don't *move*," my wife observes, exaggerating slightly.)

18. BOARD UP THE WINDOWS.

Windows are nice, but they either let in too much heat, or let out too much, or vice versa. ("This is better than mini-blinds!" I shout to the wife, who can barely hear me over her own hammering.)

19. GET RID OF THE TELEPHONE.

Think you can't live without a telephone? Think again. We've done fine. ("Who would call us?" my wife rationalizes.)

20. GET RID OF THE BED.

Many leading chiropractors say that sleeping on the floor, with no mattress or cushion, is the best way to sleep. ("We certainly haven't needed a bed much lately," my wife confides to a mutual friend.)

21. GET OUT AND ORGANIZE.

At my wife's suggestion, I got out of the house and into the community—to organize. Now I work with a diverse group of community activists, and we meet four times a week—at our house. ("Who *are* these people?" my wife asks. "They are *the people*," I tell her proudly.)

22. BAN ALL CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS.

Not just spray cans, but the refrigerator and the air conditioner. Get rid of them! We now have ice delivered to our house every day. ("You're crazy!" my wife shouts from the kitchen. "So was Van Gogh!" I shout back.)

23. TREAT WOUNDS NATURALLY.

If you're injured, cut on the head, above the eyebrow—from a sharp piece of ice, let's say—treat it naturally. Salt and lemon juice is the combination my wife favors. ("I want a divorce," she says, pouring salt on my wound. "Ouch!" I say.)

24. KNOW THE LAW.

And know a good lawyer. (My wife does.)

25. WHEN YOU MOVE, BE A GOOD NEIGHBOR.

Having recently relocated to a smaller environment—an apartment—I can empathize with anyone who has had to go through a "moving experience" as I call it. Remember, along with a new habitat come new co-inhabitants. Get to know them. They are your neighbors and, as simplistic as this sounds, they are the keys to your survival. (When I explain this simplistic theory to one of my new neighbors, she's fascinated. Maybe the beard works!)

26. CARPOOL.

At my new part-time job I carpool with a couple of the ladies from the office. We're saving gas, money, and we're getting to know each other better. ("He used to have a fear of intimacy," my wife tells the judge. On the advice of Barry, my lawyer, I can say nothing.)

27. MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR.

I know, I know. But, if I could just use one earth-saving tip to draw your attention to the beautiful and cosmic experience of making love with a truly giving and understanding sexual partner. (Take *that*, you lying, blood-sucking witch!)

28. SHARE YOUR SHOWERS.

I've done a complete one-eighty on this one. Use a kitchen timer. (Or Ravel's *Bolero*!)

29. WOMEN!

Or should I say, women judges! (This just in: She gets the car, the house—everything except the profits from this book, Dear Reader.)

30. YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

When someone (especially someone much younger and less experienced than yourself that you only met two weeks ago) tells you that one person can't make a difference—that no matter how much shouting and yelling and "whining and complaining" one person does nothing will change, that "you're too old to be acting that way," that "you should settle down and focus on one thing and do that well"—when someone lays that trip on you, it's time to split. ("I *can* make a difference!" I tell her, gathering my things.)

31. BUNDLE AND RECYCLE NEWSPAPERS.

Sorry, I lost sight of what we're trying to do here, which is save the earth. Take all your old newspapers, bundle them together, and bring them to a recycling center. They'll give you a few bucks, which is nothing to sneeze at. (*What happened?*)

32. BUY A "RECYCLED" CAR.

There are some good deals in used cars—if you take the time to look. (I didn't, and boy am I sorry.)

33. DON'T LITTER THE HIGHWAYS.

Be considerate. There are laws, but they're rarely enforced. (Except in *my* case, of course. I told the officer I wasn't living in my car—it had broken down, I was tired—but: A \$100 fine for vagrancy, a night in jail, a towing charge of \$75, *and* a ticket—*I'm getting rid of this damn car!*)

34. KEEP FIGHTING.

That's right. No matter how tough it gets, the fight to save the earth will go on, with or without you. (Right now it's without. I'm back to my old habits again—smoking, drinking, and hanging out with a bunch of losers. One of them is a real nut, calls himself "The Master.")

35. DONATE OLD CLOTHING.

There are people out there who can get some good use out of your old moth-eaten sweater or sports jacket or worn-out pair of shoes. (I'm a 41 short.)

36. FOLLOW THE MASTER.

The Master has forged an "alliance with the human spirit" that allows him to speak directly and simultaneously to every living thing on this planet. (Follow The Master.)

37. **THINK FOR YOURSELF.**

Take it from someone who, after having his self-esteem obliterated by a persuasive con man and his gang of sycophants, escaped on foot—with nothing to eat for nine days but wild berries and mushrooms—*and lived to talk about it!* (You might have seen the story in the papers—"DAZED FOLLOWER OF DIZZY GURU FOUND ON FREEWAY")

38. **HI, HOW ARE YOU?**

I knew it was her before I picked up the phone. (The cobwebs that covered the receiver were now sticking to my face. "Fine," I said.)

39. **DON'T BE FOOLED.**

A wise consumer is a protected consumer. (I told my ex this when we got together for some Irish coffee at the mini-mall, near the old house. She ended up selling that barn for—get this—\$650,000! "Honey, it seems like old times!" I whooped.)

40. **RECYCLE! REVIVE! RERUN!**

Excuse my exuberance, but something is finally happening out there—something positive, something good. People are separating their garbage. They're using biodegradable, ecologically safe, recyclable and reusable materials. *Everything old is new again!* (When my ex-wife and I decided to re-marry, I suggested a "Save the Earth" clause be added to our pre-nuptial agreement. "We have to talk," she said, showing great interest at the time.)

41. **MOVE TO THE COUNTRY.**

Inherit the land again. That's what we did. Bought forty-three acres in Upstate New York. It's a working farm, where my wife can go out to the barn and milk the cows, pick out the freshest eggs and knit our clothes from the wool she shears from our very own sheep. (And I can finish this book!)

42. **SHARE THIS BOOK.**

I want this book to be passed on to those with limited resources. (And limited imaginations! Have you seen any of these other "x-number-of-things-you-can-do-to-save-the-earth" books? Talk about writing in your sleep! "You're just jealous," my wife cracks, half-crocked.)

43. **MOVE BACK TO THE CITY.**

The housing market. like any organism operating within a much larger organism—which

we call the ecosphere, or the biosphere, or the earth—has its variables. We've decided to give the land back to those who really own it (my in-laws), and live once again at the heart of the ecosphere, the city. ("I'd like to look at *separate* beds," my wife tells me and the salesman at Bloomingdale's.)

44. LIFE GOES ON.

And I could go on, *ad nauseam*, about the proper storage of milk, the use of insects as insecticides, how to check for impurities in your tap water—but there are bigger problems. (*Much* bigger.)

45. IT WON'T BE EASY.

Nobody likes the maverick or the visionary. ("The public's had it up to here with those stupid 'x-number-of-things-you-can-do-to-save-the-earth' books," my wife slurs unintelligibly. "I've had it up to here too," I tell her.)

46. OLD FRIENDS.

Remember Barry? The lawyer? Well, I had occasion to see him again recently and I noticed that he was using a Mont Blanc pen, the finest fountain pen in the world. It was inlaid with pearl, *real* pearl, and gold. I couldn't control myself, so I asked him, Where can I get one? (Want to know? See below.)

47. BIG SALE, 15-25% OFF.

Right now, if you write to the address on the back cover, you can find out how to get "the finest fountain pen in the world," the Mont Blanc, at tremendous savings. And, you'll be buying it—*direct*—from an officially-licensed Mont Blanc dealer. (Me! I need some cash—she socked it to me again, Dear Reader.)

48. TURN THE LIGHTS ON.

And flush the toilet. Forget about saving the earth. At least for now. It's time to get your life in order. Grow up. Focus on one thing and do it and be done with it. ("For once he's acting like an adult," my ex-ex tells a mutual friend.)

49. WRITE A BOOK.

It's easy! Pick a topic that's currently in vogue (It doesn't have to be the environment!) and write whatever comes into your head—and write and write and write and write until you can't write anymore. I did. And somebody bought it—and gave me a six-figure advance on the next one, *49 More Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth*, \$12.95, paper, due out next March. ("Honey, it seems like old times!" my ex-ex whooped over the phone. It was good to hear from her.)

