

The Department of Environmental Quality and its employees would like to share these conservation tips that will help you save money and protect the environment. Protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility and we should all chip in to do our part. By working together, we can make a difference.

BE THE SOLUTION

TECHNOLOGY: SHORT TERM

Don't buy what you don't need.

The latest technology gadgets and machines come with all sorts of tempting bells and whistles, but continuing to use what you already have for a similar purpose is the most earth-friendly action. And when a piece of technology breaks, compare repair costs to replacement.

\$ Factor:

In avoiding technology temptations, your bank account will thank you.

Do away with cordless.

If you need to buy a new phone for a bedroom or home office, consider buying one with a cord. You'll save about 28 kwh of energy per phone annually. Standard corded phones consume little energy, while cordless units draw constant power during charging and standby modes.

\$ Factor:

If 5 percent of U.S. households chose one corded phone over the cordless model, the energy savings would total 140 million kilowatt hours annually -- enough talk time to keep 130,000 teens' phone lines busy for every waking hour of the summer.

Donate old cellular phones.

You can donate your phone to a charity or sell it to a third-party recycler. Less than 1 percent of all cell phones are currently recycled and there are 500 million used cell phones not being used in the U.S. alone. About 130 million cell phones get tossed every year. Soon, there will be as many discarded every year as are purchased. Unfortunately, the final resting place for many trashed electronics, like cell phones and old computers, is the third world. But this just shifts the burden because these toxic items are often incinerated; sending fumes into the air and the fumes just travel right back here to this country. Yuck!

\$ Factor:

You can get a tax deduction for the phone's value or get hard money for it from the recycler.



Consider digital storage.

Try using digital storage, such as USB drives. These compact devices, which can transfer large amounts of data between computers, are growing in popularity. According to the research firm Gartner, by 2008, the number of these drives shipped will have increased to 155 million per year (up from 110 million in 2007.)

\$ Factor:

USB drives can save space and paper normally earmarked for filing. That means less need for filing supplies.

Send e-cards.

They're better and cheaper than traditional print ones. Most greeting cards bought in the U.S. each year aren't recycled. For many recipients, it's the message that counts more than the medium. Not to mention, animated e-cards are just plain fun.

\$ Factor:

Birthdays and other occasions deserving of a greeting come up often, so sticking with free e-cards means savings at the store and at the post office.

Download your software.

With more than 1 billion unwanted computer disks being thrown away per year, that's a huge mountain of waste, not to mention the packing material -- 55 million boxes. Most software can be downloaded online.

\$ Factor:

Most downloadable software available online is less expensive than buying it in a store or even ordering online. The manufacturers save on transportation and distribution costs and don't have to split the profit with middlemen.

Send plantable greetings.

These cards, which grow when placed or buried in the backyard, are available from companies such as Green Field Paper Co. and Bloomin' Flower Cards.

\$ Factor:

These cards cost about the same as regular greeting cards and come in a variety of designs.

Use recyclable cameras.

When an occasion calls for a single-use camera, look for take-back programs. Kodak, for example, has designed its one-time use cameras so that consumers drop the entire camera off for developing. That photofinisher is then encouraged -- through reimbursements and paid shipping costs -- to send the camera back to Kodak for remanufacturing. Kodak claims to have recycled more than 800 million single-use cameras since introducing its program in 1990. Fujifilm also has a take-back program.

\$ Factor:

Single-use cameras can't be beat for convenience and worry-free picture snapping on the go. Companies with take-back programs don't seem to have passed along any additional expenses to consumers, as these cameras are price-competitive.

Tips provided by: Bankrate.com and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality staff.