

PURCHASES & SHOPPING

Our every-day purchases can have an impact on our individual well-being, the health of our community and global conditions. Instead of just mindlessly grabbing stuff at the store, it is time to think about how and why we buy things.

Here are some areas to think about before your next shopping trip:

- Are these purchases necessary? 8~2
- What are the impacts of the manufacturing and use of these items? 8~4
- How can I reduce the amount of packaging? 8~6
- Can I buy this locally? 8~9





Are these purchases necessary?

We live in a consumer-oriented society where too much emphasis is placed on buying stuff, whether or not we really need it. Here are some things to consider next time you are shopping to help you cut back on unnecessary purchases and save money.

“Too many people spend money they earned, to buy things they don’t want, to impress people that they don’t like.” ~Will Rogers

Before you purchase any item, think to yourself if you really need it.

- Why are you buying it? Is it necessary? Can you do without it?
- We often just pick up items as we walk through the store without much thought on the necessity of the product. By making conscious decisions in your shopping, you can save money by only buying what you truly need.

How to shop consciously:

- Shop with a list and stick to it.
- Understand your reasoning for buying stuff – is it an emotional purchase?
- Here are some steps to help you stop making emotional purchases:
 - Ask yourself if you really need an item and why.
 - Don’t shop when you are hungry or in a gloomy mood.
 - Take a limited amount of cash with you instead of using a credit or debit card.
 - Create a waiting period for items not on your list such as clothes, books or other unnecessary purchases. For example, make yourself wait a week before buying the new sweater you saw at the store.
 - Find another way to relieve stress other than shopping – exercise, reading, walking, etc.

“Are these things really better than the things I already have? Or am I just trained to be dissatisfied with what I have now?” ~ Chuck Palahniuk



Before you replace and item, can it be fixed or mended?

- You can save a lot of money when you chose to fix or mend items that you already have instead of throwing them out and replacing them.
- Many items are still useful but in our culture we are so conditioned to throw something away that is no longer perfect because we can easily go to the store and replace it. Not only does this cost money, it also creates much more garbage to fill our landfills.
- Utilize a local repair company, shoe cobbler or seamstress if you aren't comfortable with fixing the item yourself.
- Learning how to fix thing can be fun and a great lesson for your kids and a good family activity.

How to fix things:

Here are some great resources on how to fix things:

- Fix-It Club;
www.fixitclub.com
- Top 10 Repair Projects You Should Never Pay For;
lifehacker.com/5837117/top-10-repair-projects-you-should-never-pay-for
- 15 Things you Should Repair Instead of Replace, The Daily Green;
www.thedailygreen.com/green-homes/latest/repair-things-461109
- Share What You Make, Instructables;
www.instructables.com/index

Take a spending break once a week where you don't buy a single item all day.

- Set aside one day a week (or start with one day every two weeks) where you don't spend anything at all.
- This will require a little bit of advanced planning so that you have gas in your car and food to eat.
- By taking a break from spending, you will hopefully begin to see how much it is an automatic, unconscious part of your life and how you can begin to cut some of it out.



By only making necessary purchases, our economy, community, family and environment thrive.



What are the impacts of the manufacturing and use of these items?

In addition to what we are buying, it is important for us to evaluate how the products we buy were made and what impacts they will have when we are using and done with them.

Evaluate the impacts of the products you buy:

(*"The Six Sins of Greenwashing," TerraChoice Marketing; www.terrachoice.com/files/6_sins.pdf*)

- **Watch out for the “greenwashing” of products.**
 - We all want to buy products that aren't harmful to the environment or to our own health. Unfortunately, many manufacturers and retailers claim to use environmentally sound, healthy practices and ingredients when in fact, they don't.
 - These companies are spending billions of dollars every year to convince us, the consumers that their products have little or no impact on the environment, or can even help. When in fact, they are spending more money on marketing, packaging and labeling than they are on actual product development that is truly environmentally sound.
 - When greenwashing occurs, well-meaning consumers can be misled into buying items that aren't living up to their environmental claims.

- **What to watch out for:**
 - **Hidden trade-offs:** when a product claims it is “green” based on a single environmental component (using recycled paper), without attention to more important environmental issues (chemicals in the product, water used to create the product, other harmful impacts of the product).
Examples:
 - Office technology (printers, copiers, fax machines) that promote energy efficiency without attention to hazardous material content, indoor air quality or compatibility with recycled paper or remanufactured toner cartridges.
 - Many laundry detergents, dish detergents, air fresheners, bathroom cleaners, markers, flooring laminate, bags, multi-purpose cleaners, wood panels and pesticides make these claims.
 - 57% of products in a recent study had hidden trade-offs.
 - **No proof:** when a product has an environmental claim that cannot be verified by easily accessible supporting information or by a reliable third-party certification. Examples:
 - Household lamps and lights that promote their energy efficiency without any supporting evidence or certification.



- Facial tissues and paper towels that claim post-consumer recycled content without providing evidence.
- **Vagueness:** claims that are so poorly defined or broad that the real meaning is likely to be misunderstood by the consumer. Examples:
 - “Non-toxic.” Everything is toxic in sufficient dosage.
 - “All Natural.” Arsenic is natural. So are uranium, mercury and formaldehyde. Yet all are poisonous.
- **Irrelevance:** when a product makes an environmental claim that may be truthful but is unimportant and unhelpful for consumers seeking environmentally-preferable products. It is irrelevant and therefore distracts the consumer from finding a truly greener option. Examples:
 - Many products claim to be CFC-free, but CFCs have been banned for almost 30 years. CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) were a principle contributor to ozone depletion. So this claim has NO merit.
- **Greenwashing Resources and Information:**
 - The Top 25 Greenwashed Products in America, Business Pundit; www.businesspundit.com/the-top-25-greenwashed-products-in-america/
 - Greenwashing Index; www.greenwashingindex.com

Support responsible companies.

- If you can't find a product with good environmental qualities, at minimum you should buy from companies and business that are acting in a responsible manner.
- Buy from businesses and manufacturers who are working to reduce their own environmental impact, utilize renewable energy and are committed to energy efficiency upgrades. Also from those who support their employees and the surrounding community of where these products are made and sold.

How to support these companies:

- When deciding where to purchase your products from, choose local businesses whenever possible.
- Be knowledgeable about the products you are using and their impact on your health, the environment and the manufacturing and operating processes of those products:
 - Environmental, Social and Health Ratings of Products, GoodGuide; www.goodguide.com
 - Review the Climate Scorecard of Companies, Climate Counts; climatecounts.org/scorecard_overview.php
 - Buying Green, Park City Green.org; parkcitygreen.org/Ways-to-Save/Lifestyle/Buy-Green/Links.aspx



When we understand the impacts of the product we buy, this can affect our health, economy, community and the environment.



How can I reduce the amount of packaging?

Packaging serves many purposes. Its primary purpose is to protect and contain a product. It also can prevent tampering, provide information and preserve hygienic integrity and freshness. Some packaging, however, is designed largely to enhance a product's attractiveness or prominence on the store shelf.

Since packaging materials account for a large volume of the trash we generate, they provide a good opportunity for reducing waste.

Here are some ways to reduce the amount of packaging in the products we buy:

- When choosing between two similar products, select the one with the least unnecessary packaging.
- Choose packaging that is recyclable.
- Remember that wrenches, screwdrivers, nails and other hardware are often available in loose bins. At the grocery, consider whether it is necessary to purchase items such as tomatoes, garlic and mushrooms in prepackaged containers when they can be bought unpackaged.
- When appropriate, use products you already have on hand to do household chores (see Household Materials / Cleaning Products in the Home section of this guide). Using these products can save on the packaging associated with additional products.
- Recognize and support store managers when they stock products with no packaging or reduced packaging. Let clerks know when it's not necessary to double wrap a purchase.
- Consider large or economy-sized items for household products that are used frequently, such as laundry soap, shampoo, baking soda, pet foods and cat litter. These sizes usually have less packaging per unit of product. For food items, choose the largest size that can be used before spoiling.
- Consider whether concentrated products are appropriate for your needs. They often require less packaging and less energy to transport to the store, saving money as well as natural resources.
- Whenever possible, select grocery, hardware and household items that are available in bulk. Bulk merchandise also may be shared with friends or neighbors.
- It is important to choose food services that are appropriate to your needs. One alternative to single food services is to choose the next largest serving and store any leftovers in a reusable container.



- Remember to bring your reusable soda or coffee mugs when buying drinks.
- **Use reusable grocery bags instead of plastic or paper bags when shopping.**

Plastic grocery bags are a big contributor to litter when they are discarded. They are causing harm to sea birds, marine mammals and fish when they are mistaken as food in the water and on beaches.

Paper bags aren't much better on the environment since they require more energy and resources than plastic bags to produce and recycle. According to the Food Marketing Institute's Plastic Bag Backgrounder (See Resources), "a paper bag requires four times more energy to produce than a plastic bag (2,511 BTUs vs. 594 BTUs) and the manufacturing process of paper bags generates 70% more air and 50 times more water pollutants than plastic bags." And they estimate that it takes almost twice as much energy to recycle equal amounts of paper versus plastic.

Keep your reusable bags in a place where you will remember to grab them every time you go to the store – in your car, near the door of your garage, anywhere that you will see them when going shopping.

DON'T BUY BOTTLED WATER.

- Our municipal water systems are safe, tested regularly and our tap water is essentially free, so why are we still buying water in plastic bottles?
- Bottled water can cost up to 10,000 times more than tap water and can cost more per gallon than gasoline.
- According to a report in National Geographic, bottled water also has big impacts on the following areas:
 - **Oil Consumption**
 - Americans drink more bottled water than any other nation, purchasing an impressive 29 billion bottles every year. Making all the plastic for those bottles uses 17 million barrels of crude oil annually. That is equivalent to the fuel needed to keep 1 million vehicles on the road for 12 months. If you were to fill one quarter of a plastic water bottle with oil, you would be looking at roughly the amount used to produce that bottle.
 - **Recycling**
 - The recycling rate for those 29 billion bottles of water is low; only about 13% ends up in the recycling stream where they are turned into products like fleece clothing, carpeting, decking, playground equipment and new containers and bottles. In 2005, that meant approximately 2 million tons of water bottles ended up in U.S. landfills, according to the National



Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Plastic bottles take centuries to decompose and if they are incinerated, toxic byproducts, such as chlorine gas and ash containing heavy metals, are released into the atmosphere.

- **Transportation**

- Bottled water often takes a long journey to U.S. markets. In 2006, the equivalent of 2 billion half-liter bottles arrived in U.S. ports, according to the NRDC. Fiji shipped 18 million gallons of bottled water to California, releasing about 2,500 tons of transportation-related pollution. Western Europe's shipment of bottled water to New York City that year released 3,800 tons of pollution. The Earth Policy Institute estimates that the energy used to pump, process, transport and refrigerate bottled water is over 50 million barrels of oil annually.

- **Contaminants**

- Bottled water isn't always as safe as tap water. The NRDC conducted a four-year study of the bottled water industry and concluded that while most bottled water is safe to drink, there are areas of concern. Roughly 22% of the water tested contained contaminant levels that exceeded strict state health limits. One study found that hormone-disrupting phthalates had leached into bottled water that had been stored for 10 weeks.

- **Lack of Testing**

- While the EPA requires drinking water suppliers (tap water in our homes) to use certified labs to test their water, the FDA does not have this authority over bottled water. Further more, test results don't have to be reported to the FDA – even if the test results show violations of drinking water quality standards.
- While the EPA requires public drinking water systems to annually publish the results of water quality testing, along with information about the drinking water source and known threats, the FDA does not require this of bottled water companies.



Reducing the amount of packaging is beneficial to the environment, our communities, economy and health.

How to replace bottled water:

- Buy reusable containers that you can fill up anywhere.
- Install a filter system on your tap at home or use a filtered pitcher for better tasting water.



Can I buy this locally?

Local businesses are the foundation of our community. They provide jobs, services and tax revenues. In addition, money spent at locally-owned businesses stay in the local economy. So whenever you are making a purchase, ask yourself if you can buy it from a locally-owned business.

“Top 10 Reasons to Support Locally Owned Businesses”

(The Institute for Local Self Reliance, www.ilsr.org, © Institute for Local Self-Reliance)

1. Local Character and Prosperity

In an increasingly homogenized world, communities that preserve their one-of-a-kind businesses and distinctive character have an economic advantage.

2. Community Well-Being

Locally-owned businesses build strong communities by sustaining vibrant town centers, linking neighbors in a web of economic and social relationships, and contributing to local causes.

3. Local Decision-Making

Local ownership ensures that important decisions are made locally by people who live in the community and who will feel the impacts of those decisions.

4. Keeping Dollars in the Local Economy

Compared to chain stores, locally owned businesses recycle a much larger share of their revenue back into the local economy, enriching the whole community.

5. Jobs and Wages

Locally-owned businesses create more jobs locally and, in some sectors, provide better wages and benefits than chains do.

6. Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship fuels America’s economic innovation and prosperity, and serves as a key means for families to move out of low-wage jobs and into the middle class.

7. Public Benefits and Costs

Local stores in town centers require comparatively little infrastructure and make more efficient use of public services relative to big box stores and strip shopping malls.

8. Environmental Sustainability

Local stores help to sustain vibrant, compact, walkable town centers-which in turn are essential to reducing sprawl, automobile use, habitat loss, and air and water pollution.

9. Competition

A marketplace of tens of thousands of small businesses is the best way to ensure innovation and low prices over the long-term.

10. Product Diversity

A multitude of small businesses, each selecting products based, not on a national sales plan, but on their own interests and the needs of their local customers, guarantees a much broader range of product choices.



How to support local businesses:

First and foremost, support the small, locally-owned business over the large, big-box retail stores (such as WalMart and Home Depot). You might spend a bit more money, but know that your hard-earned dollars are staying in your community.

- Know what businesses are in your community and what they offer.
- Spend a day walking along your main street or other area of commerce and visit the shops you pass by.
- Hire local contractors: plumbers, painters and such. They are local businesses as well and have a local reputation to uphold.

First steps:

Get to know what is available locally. Make a conscious effort to buy what you need in your home town before driving elsewhere.

Studies have shown that for every \$100 you spend in a locally-owned, independent store, \$68 of that comes back to your community in the way of taxes, payroll, and other expenditures. When you shop at a national chain, only \$43 comes back. And shopping online, while convenient, adds nothing to the local economy.

Local Business Resources:

- Summit County On-Line Business Directory;
summitcountybusiness.com
- Park City Chamber of Commerce Business Directory;
www.visitparkcity.com/member-directory
- The local Yellow Pages and phone books



*Buying items from local businesses
affects our economy, our
community and our environment.*

Additional Information:

- Business Alliance for Local Living Economies;
bealocalist.org
- American Independent Business Alliance;
www.amiba.net