

Be a Climate Hero



Climate  
Tips

from the  
City of Cambridge

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## THERE ARE TWO PARTS TO BEING A CLIMATE HERO.

- ▶ **1.** Have a lighter impact on the earth, by changing how we go about our daily lives.
- ▶ **2.** Work for the large-scale changes that government, businesses, and institutions need to participate in to reorganize our world so that it no longer depends on burning fossil fuels.

We need to do both, and while this can seem like a daunting pair of tasks, most of it is a matter of doing things differently — not of doing a lot of extra things and not of depriving ourselves — and these different ways of doing things can save money, save time, and improve our quality of life.

Here are some tips about actions that you can take in Cambridge. Give yourself credit for what you're already doing, and see what other changes you can make.



Check the boxes to track how well you are doing.

## REDUCING YOUR IMPACT

### TRANSPORTATION

- Most of your trips are on foot, bike, or T.
- Your car gets 30+ miles a gallon.
- Your car is tuned up, you change your air filter regularly, and your tires are properly inflated.



Most air pollution comes from short rides. Car engines are very inefficient when they are first started — that's why people drive around for 20 minutes before they have their cars inspected. About 30% of the trips we take are less than a mile, a distance most people can easily walk. About half are less than five miles, a bikable distance for most people.

**Prevention magazine** named Cambridge the best walking city in the United States in 2008. Only New York City has a higher percentage of residents who don't drive to work.

## TIPS

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The **T** has an excellent trip planning function on its web site: [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com).

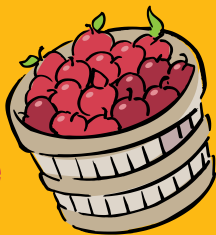
The EZRide is a bus that travels between North Station and destinations in the eastern half of the city during the rush hours. For route, schedule, and fare information, call 617-8ez-info, or log on to [www.ezride.info](http://www.ezride.info).

## FOOD

You eat beef or pork once a week or less. Beef and pork production are outsized contributors to global warming and world hunger. Producing one pound of beef requires 8 times more energy and 20 times more land than producing a pound of vegetable protein, and of course excessive beef and pork can contribute to heart disease and cancer.

**Cambridge** has more farmers' markets than any other Massachusetts community.

You make it a point to eat locally grown food as much as possible. Eating locally grown food reduces the fuel burned in transporting food, and it helps preserve New England's farms, and our countryside. Plus it's fresher—you can taste the difference!



You regularly choose organic food. Pesticides and fertilizers are poisoning much of our nation's land and water. Organic food doesn't always cost more, and when you buy it, you are making an important contribution to keeping our land and water productive.

## **YOUR HOME**

Most Cambridge residents live in multifamily housing. This gives us a head start in living energy efficiently, but it can make some actions more complicated. If you are among the 2/3 of Cambridge residents who rent, there are some inexpensive things you can do that will make a real difference.

## Whether you own or rent . . . .

If you own your house or condo, you get an energy audit from the Cambridge Energy Alliance. Go to [www.cambridgeenergyalliance.org](http://www.cambridgeenergyalliance.org) or call 1-866-351-7887. If you rent, talk with your landlord about getting an audit.

You install a programmable thermostat. When you are home in winter, you can set it to where you would be comfortable wearing a sweater — between 65 and 68 degrees. At night or while everyone is out, you can set it to where you would be comfortable under warm covers — between 55 and 60 degrees.

In summer, you use a fan to keep cool, instead of an air conditioner.

If you have an air conditioner that is more than ten years old, you replace it with an Energy Star-rated model and buy the most efficient air conditioner you can get for the size of the room you are cooling.



An air conditioner that is too big for the room can't remove enough moisture from the air to keep you comfortable.

### **If you own your home . . . .**

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- You make sure it is well insulated.
- You make sure your windows keep out the cold. If you have single-pane windows, you buy new energy-efficient windows or install storm windows or, for less money, tightly cover windows with plastic sheeting.
- You clean vents and heaters and replace the furnace filter regularly.
- You tune up and clean your oil heating system every year, and your gas heating system every two years.
- To keep your building cooler in summer and help make the city cooler, your roof is a light color. A black roof can reach 190 degrees on a hot summer day, while a reflective white roof, which costs no more to install, will only reach 120 degrees.

**Hot Water** can account for 14% of your heating bill.

To use less hot water, you

- Set your water heater temperature at 120 degrees. Many are set at 140, which is wasteful and can cause burns.
- Insulate your exposed hot water pipes and your hot water tank if it lacks internal insulation.

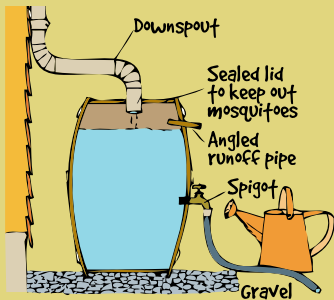
## SAVING WATER

- You have low-flow toilets. If you have an old toilet, it may not be a low-flow.
- You have low-flow showerheads and aerators on your faucets to reduce water use. These are available at local hardware stores and are inexpensive and easy to install. They pay for themselves within weeks.
- You take showers instead of baths, but not long ones (showers use one-third the water of baths).





□ You use barrels to catch rain runoff from your gutters and use this water for gardening and washing cars. Every spring DPW holds a sale at which rain barrels can be purchased at reduced cost. For more information, call 617 349-4800.



□ You wash clothes in cold water (unless they have oil stains). They get just as clean as they do in hot water. Ninety percent of the energy used by a clothes washer is for heating water.

□ Most of the time, you dry clothes on a line or rack. When you dry them outside, you enjoy the nice smell.

□ If your washing machine is old, you replace it with a new Energy Star-rated model. Front-loading washers use less water and less electricity, are gentler on clothes, and leave the clothes partly dry. (For information about rebates on energy efficient appliances, visit [myenergystar.com](http://myenergystar.com) or call 877 378-2748.)

## ELECTRICITY

You change your lights to compact fluorescents (CFLs). They contain some mercury, but considerably less than the mercury that is put in the air by a power plant generating the extra electricity needed for an incandescent. CFLs use 75% less electricity than incandescent lightbulbs, saving \$30 or more over their lifetime, and they last up to 10 times longer. Dispose of CFLs at any Cambridge hardware store or at DPW (see [www.cambridgema.gov/theworks](http://www.cambridgema.gov/theworks)).



You turn off the lights when you leave the room.

You've replaced appliances that are over 15 years old with more energy efficient models carrying the Energy Star label. The biggest user of electricity in the home is the refrigerator, so that's the most important one. For information about rebates on energy efficient appliances, visit [myenergystar.com](http://myenergystar.com) or call 877 378-2748.



□ You turn off everything not in use. Appliances with digital displays are drawing energy even when they are turned off, so they should be unplugged. Several appliances can be plugged into a power strip so you can easily turn them off completely when not in use (for example, coffeemakers; microwaves; toasters; TVs; DVD, CD and video players; computers; and monitors). Chargers for phones, MP3



*Appliances account for about 20% of your household's energy use.*

players, laptop computers, batteries, and other devices should be unplugged when not in use. As long as they are plugged in, they use electricity.

Plasma TVs use huge amounts of electricity. Energy efficient models may be available soon. Meanwhile, the best option is to wait before buying. Otherwise, you will be stuck with an energy hog. If you already bought one, you can calibrate it to use less energy.

You set your computer to sleep after it's not in use for ten or fifteen minutes, and when you are going to be away from your desk for more than two hours, you turn it off.

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

We need to use much more of the energy that comes from sources that naturally renew themselves: the sun (solar), wind, water, the heat of the earth (geothermal). We can do this in two ways: by installing renewable energy on our own property and by purchasing renewable energy that has been installed elsewhere.

You buy renewable energy. Cambridge residents can buy wind power from NSTAR. This is an easy way for residents and businesses to offset their emissions and help the renewable market grow, at relatively little cost. Log onto the NSTAR website, [www.nstaronline.com](http://www.nstaronline.com).



You install a solar photovoltaic system to provide electricity.

Rebates are available through the Mass. Technology Collaborative as well as federal and state tax credits.

You install a solar hot water system. These use solar collectors that usually sit on the roof, and contain a liquid that absorbs the sun's heat

and transfers that heat to your hot water. For most people, this is the easiest and most economical way to take advantage of renewable energy. (See [www.eere.energy.gov](http://www.eere.energy.gov)).

***The Cambridge City Council has mandated that 20% of the electricity for municipal operations come from renewable sources by 2010.***

## REDUCING WASTE

You recycle more stuff than you toss in the trash. You keep track of what can be recycled in Cambridge.



You compost food waste. (see [www.cambridgema.gov/theworks](http://www.cambridgema.gov/theworks))

- You drink tap water rather than buying bottled water. (You know that Cambridge has exceptional water.)
- You've reduced your junk mail. (Write to: Mail Preference Service, Direct Marketing Association, PO Box 9008, Farmington, NY 11735 and request that your name be removed from all third class mailing lists. To stop receiving catalogs, go to [www.catalogchoice.org](http://www.catalogchoice.org), a free cancellation service.)
- You give away or sell things you no longer need.



## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Tackling global warming isn't just about reducing our individual environmental impacts. It also means creating a community in which people work together to make sure that everyone thrives. It means figuring out together how to adapt to the climate disruption that we know is inevitable. And it means making change at the state and federal level, and in our businesses and institutions.

You pay attention to what is happening in Cambridge and attend community meetings.

Many neighborhood groups and Cambridge environmental groups are listed at [www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/cp/neigh/neighorgs.html](http://www.cambridgema.gov/cdd/cp/neigh/neighorgs.html).

You write letters or emails or make phone calls to state and federal officials about legislative and budget priorities.

A couple of good sources of information:

Mass. Climate Action Network is at [www.massclimateaction.org](http://www.massclimateaction.org); for national bulletins, try Cambridge-based Union of Concerned Scientists at [www.ucsusa.org](http://www.ucsusa.org). There are many others as well. Look for state and national organizations that reflect your values and priorities, sign up for their email alerts, and then call or email or send letters to legislators. A phone call is a quick and effective way to be counted on the issues.

***Cambridge has a climate protection e-mail bulletin. To receive it, contact [jboulduc@cambridgema.gov](mailto:jboulduc@cambridgema.gov).***

You let businesses know both when you support their positive efforts and when you're unhappy about something they are doing.

You express at your work, at play, at your place of worship — to any group you're involved with — your interest in figuring out how the group can respond fully to the challenge of climate change.

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This is a project of the  
CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department,  
Environmental and Transportation Planning Division  
344 Broadway, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139.

For more information, call

Phone: 617 349-4604 TTY: 617 349-4621

or visit the website: [www.cambridgema.gov/climate](http://www.cambridgema.gov/climate).