

Household Elf

Brownie WoW badge

It's great to have a clean home, and even better if it's a clean, green home. In this badge, pick up some new household habits to help your family save energy, save water, and save the planet.

Steps

1. Save energy
2. Save water
3. Go natural
4. Reuse or recycle
5. Clear the air

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to make my home clean and green.

Make your space an earth-saving place.

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more!

Step 1 Save energy

When you sleep, you're saving your energy so you can play more when you're awake. Saving energy in your house is important, too. That helps make sure Earth doesn't run out of the energy that makes electricity. It costs less for your family, too.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Be a light-saver. For one week, make sure lights are turned off in rooms no one is using. Are there other energy-users you can switch off, too?

OR

Go on an energy scavenger hunt. With your family, look for appliances and electronics that are plugged in when they're not in use. Some of these things use energy, called "standby power," even if they're not turned on! Together, make a plan to conserve energy for one week.

FOR MORE FUN: Ask a staff member at a home-improvement store how power strips can help you save standby power.

OR

Find out about three ways to use less energy. Make a plan with your family to be more efficient energy users. (Being efficient means you're careful to use only what you really need.) You might replace five regular lightbulbs with energy-saving fluorescent bulbs, clean the lint filter after every dryer load so drying takes less energy, or wash clothes with cold water instead of using energy to heat water.

MORE TO EXPLORE: Put a draft stopper over cracks under doors or along edges of windows so heat doesn't leak out of your home. This way, when it's cold outside, you need less energy to stay warm inside.

1. Start with a pair of tights or panty hose. Cut the top and feet off the legs so you have two separate tubes.
2. Tie one end closed tightly with ribbon.
3. Pour dried beans or corn into the open hole. You will need about 5 pounds of one of them.
4. Tie of the other end. Place it along the bottom of a door or window to keep warm air in and cold air out.

FUN FACT: Your freezer uses less energy when it's full. This is because frozen things help keep each other cold. You don't have to stuff it full of frozen food - water stored in jugs and food storage containers will work, too.

Step 2 Save water

One of the planet's most important resources is water. Everyone needs to protect it, or one day we could run out! Try one of these ways to save water at your own home.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Use less water by taking shorter baths or showers for one week. Did you know that for every minute you shower you use about 5 gallons of water? That means if you take a 10-minute shower, you've used 50 gallons of water. A bathtub holds 60 gallons of water. Try to trip your shower time to save water. If you take a bath, fill the tub only half full.

FOR MORE FUN: Shower like Cousin Cloudberry for some water-saving fun.

OR

Turn off the faucet when brushing your teeth. An average running faucet uses about 2 or 3 gallons per minute. If you left the faucet on for five minutes while you brushed your teeth, you wasted nearly 15 gallons of water! Make a sign to put to put next to the sink to remind your family to do the same.

OR

Find 3 ways to save water. Team up with your family to make a water-saving plan. Try following the plan for two weeks. Need some ideas to start? Try running the dishwasher only when it's full, or when washing dishes, don't let the water run. What other ideas do you have?

Sing in the Shower like Cousin Cloudberry

Cousin Cloudberry loves singing in the shower. To save water, she sings a short-shower tune. You can, too. Here's how:

Time how long it takes you to sing your favorite song. Then choose a water-saving length for your shower, and sing for just that amount of time.

For example, Cousin Cloudberry loves the Brownie Smile Song. It take she one minute to sing, and she wants to take a three-minute shower, so, she sings the song three times, then turns off the water.

Step 3 Go natural

Using natural products, or things that are made with ingredients found in nature, is better for our earth. Instead of a chemical or a plastic being created, you can reuse something you already have. Try one of these natural solutions to a household problem.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Make a natural cleaner. Check the homemade sprays on the next page to find out how to make one for tiles or glass. Then use it to clean every week for a month. Be even greener by using a cloth or an old T-shirt instead of a paper towel!

OR

Make a natural spray to use on plants, flower, or vegetables. Look for directions below. Use the spray for 2 weeks and write down what you notice. Did the spray help scare away bugs that hurt garden plants?

OR

Take your own reusable bag to the grocery store or when helping run errands. For 1 month, count how many times you used your bag - that's how many plastic ones you kept out of the environment!

FOR MORE FUN: [Decorate a cloth bag for you and your family to use when shopping.](#)

Fantastic Fact: 4 - 5 trillion plastic bags are used worldwide every year. One family of 4 goes through about 1500 a year. Yikes!

When you look at your home with Brownie eyes,
Be prepared for a big surprise!
You will see much more as you open the door,
And do things there you never did before.

-Brownie Girl Scout Handbook, 1963

Homemade Sprays

You can make your own sprays at home with simple ingredients. They cost less than those from the store and don't use any harmful chemicals.

Glass Cleaner

Put 1cup of water into a clean plastic spray bottle. Add 1cup rubbing (isopropyl) alcohol and 1 tablespoon of white vinegar.

Use the mixture to make windows and mirrors sparkle!

Tile Cleaner

Pour 1cup of water and 1cup of water into a clean plastic spray bottle and shake. Use the mixture to safely clean kitchen and bathroom counters and tiles.

Fun Fact

White vinegar dissolves dirt, soap scum, and hard-water deposits from smooth surfaces. It's also a natural deodorizer – it will absorb odors instead of covering them with perfume-y smells. (The vinegar smell disappears when it dries, too.)

Gardening Spray

Put 1cup dish soap,
1 cup vegetable oil,
¼ cup baking soda,
½ cup skim milk,

and 1 tablespoon of water into a clean plastic spray bottle. The mixture includes things that insects don't like, so spray on plants to safely keep bugs away. Be sure to test one or two leaves first to make sure the mixture will not bother the plant. Because the milk will sour, pour out the mixture and clean the bottle when you are finished.

Step 4 Reuse or recycle

Recycling is a great way to help the environment – and reusing things is great, too. When you send bottles, paper, and plastic away to the recycling plant, it takes energy to turn them into new products. When you reuse something, you're keeping it out of the trash system altogether!

The Lifetime of Trash

How long does it take garbage to break down in the environment?

Newspaper: 6 weeks

Apple core: 2 months

Plastic bag: 10 – 20 years

Aluminum can: 80 – 200 years

Glass bottle: 1 million years

Most plastic bottles: **Never**

CHOICES – DO ONE:

How much trash can you stash? Weigh your trash for a week. See how many pounds you can reduce in your trash. Make containers for different types of recycling, and help family members use them. Is there anything in your recycling you could reuse, such as old jars or plastic bags?

FOR MORE FUN: Find out if your community has a composting plan, or if your family or a neighbor could use your compost. If so, make a container for compost, too.

OR

Recycle plastic bags. Collect 20 leftover plastic bags and take them back to a store that recycles them. Recycled plastic bags can be used to make plastic lumber for decks or swing sets and polar fleece for vests and coats.

FOR MORE FUN: Set up a place at school where other kids can bring in plastic bags. With a parent, take what you collect for a month to a store for recycling.

OR

Donate toys and clothes. With your family, go through your toys and clothes and set aside what you don't play with or wear anymore. (Make sure anything in this pile is in good enough shape that someone else could use it.) Then go online together and find a place that accepts donations. Bag up your things and drop them off!

Step 5 Clear the air

The air we breathe is important to how healthy we feel. The air inside your home can contain dust or chemicals that can cause you to sneeze or make it hard to breathe. Clean up the air in your home with one of these activities.

CHOICES - DO ONE:

Clean or replace an air filter. Find out how filters help the air, then with an adult, check the filters at your home. (If you have a central heating and air-conditioning unit, the filters might be in vents in the wall.) If they need cleaning or replacing, team up to follow the instructions to help do it.

OR

Discover natural filters. Put a plant or other natural air filter in your favorite room. For 2 weeks, notice if you can tell a difference in the air, and write down how you feel.

FOR MORE FUN: Grow the plant from a seed, or decorate the plant pot, or both.

OR

Make a natural air freshener. Work with an adult to make your own fresh scent for the house. Team up to boil 2 quarts of distilled water with 2 tablespoons of white vinegar. Add a few drops of scented oil or fruit and simmer for a few more minutes. One fresh scent to try is 2 sliced lemons with 1 tablespoon of vanilla extract.

Recycling a Landfill

One of the largest landfills in the world is Fresh Kills Landfill, where New York City trash was dumped for more than 50 years. It can actually be seen from space! Now, it's no longer in use, so, it is being turned into a park. Fresh Kills Park will be three times the size of New York's Central Park. It will have trails for horseback riding, outdoor cafes and ponds for canoeing.

WORDS WORTH KNOWING:

A **LANDFILL** is an area where large amounts of trash are placed. The trash is usually covered with dirt.

COMPOST is a material made from broken-down plants and food scraps. Farmers and gardeners mix it with dirt to help new plants grow.

Add the Badge to Your Journey

When you do step 2, trade ideas with your Brownie friends about all the ways you can love water. Maybe you will even come up with an idea for a Save Water project to do together.

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Helping make my Brownie meeting place clean and green
- Setting up recycling bins at school
- Sharing my natural cleaners with friends and neighbors

I'm inspired to: