



# How to live sustainably at Oxford University

Dos and don'ts to protect the environment and reduce your carbon footprint

First things first – if you don't know your environmental footprint, follow [this link to calculate it](#). You might be surprised.

## Reduce your energy use

Just switch it off.

Here are a few simple steps to reduce your household energy use:

- Turn off appliances and lights that you're not using. *Stand by* mode still uses energy.
- When applicable, use energy-efficient appliances and light bulbs.
- Set your heating a little bit lower (you can always put on a jumper). Turning your thermostat down by just one degree can save up to 10% of its energy consumption.
- Use an electric kettle rather than a stovetop one to boil water.
- When cooking, use a lid.
- Make sure to run the washing machine on full load.
- Hang clothes to dry instead of using the dryer.
- Join the [Student Switch Off challenge](#).
- Be aware and sensible; most of the times, your common sense will lead you to the right answer.
- Remember, even if you don't pay the electricity bill, we all pay for the consequences of our energy use.

## Explore a plant-based diet

A powerful way to live more sustainably is to eat less meat and dairy products. Now is an excellent time to explore more sustainable, healthy and creative food options, whether you're cooking, dining in your college or eating out.

You don't have to go all vegan but remember, every time you choose a plant-based dish, over meat, makes a difference.

## Recycle

Recycle as much as possible! The University offers two main streams of waste – recyclables and general waste. Make sure you put plastic packaging, glass, metal, paper and cardboard in the right bin.

Please also make sure that food packaging is washed and has no food leftovers; otherwise, the whole bin will be rejected and sent to the general waste stream.

And yes, oil leftovers on your pizza tray is still food waste. Don't recycle pizza boxes.

You should also separate your electronic waste and batteries and dispose of them in the designated recycling point. [The University's Waste Guide](#), and [Oxford city council directory](#) offer recycling guidance for each type of item.

## Avoid disposables

Single-use razors, forks, cups, bags, and food storage containers, serve you for just a few hours or days but end up lasting for decades as waste. Even if they are recycled, the environmental cost of each item is much higher than its value. By being aware and prepared, you can avoid most disposable items.

- Use a reusable water bottle and reusable keep cup. University cafes and many others in the city will even offer you a discount when you use your cup.
- Prefer unpacked food such as fruits and vegetables.
- [OxUnboxed](#) is a great place to buy unpacked dry foods as well as reusable items. There are other options in town; look for the one that suits you best.
- Use reusable face masks.

When you buy something, consider its life expectancy. How long can the item be used? Will it have more than one use? When you're done with it, will it end up in the trash? Start investing in reusable products to replace the items you most often throw away.

### Resell or donate items/buy pre-loved items

Oxford has many excellent second-hand stores operated by various charities. Students often buy new items that they use for a just few months and dispose of at the end of the year. You can get your clothes, shoes, household items, book etc. in one of the second-hand stores for a low price and then donate or resell them.

You will help the world twice – firstly by not throwing away perfectly good items, and second by allowing these charities to raise money for their activities.

You can also try buying or reselling items through websites and apps such as Gumtree or Facebook Marketplace.

### Buy fairtrade products

When you purchase items that are imported from all over the world — particularly coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, chocolate, and fruit — look for the *fairtrade* certification. This tells you that these items were grown using sustainable methods of agriculture and that local people are receiving fair prices for what they produce.

Oxford is a Fairtrade accredited University. Most departmental cafes and some colleges will offer fairtrade items as their default products.

### Think before you shop

The best way to manage waste is not to make it in the first place.

Avoid unnecessary shopping. The next time you feel the need to buy something, stop and think. Do you really need it? If so, is there a better, more ethical way to get it?

- Prefer pre-loved items from one of the second-hand shops in Oxford
- Invest in things that will last long and serve you well.
- Learn and recognise the more ethical products and firms. Look for standards and indications that the manufacture considers their environment and their workers.
- If you choose to buy online, try to consolidate your shopping with friends or housemates to reduce the negative effect of transport and packaging.

## Cycle and Walk

For most students, the best way to get around Oxford is a bicycle. The University offers support in the form of free safety bike training, bike mechanic and discounts on locks and lights. You can find a guide to buying second-hand bikes on our website .

If needed, check public transportation options in your area, such as a bus, train, or carpool.

## Save water

An easy way to live more sustainably is to conserve household water use.

- Limit your showers to four minutes.
- Turn the water off while brushing your teeth, shaving or washing the dishes.
- As always, be aware and sensible.

Smaller changes in your house, such as switching to water-saving showerheads and adding aerators to your sink taps, are also effective ways to reduce household water use significantly.

## Spread the word.

Different people have different levels of awareness; share your knowledge and experience with your friends and housemates. Respectful and polite comments are likely to be welcomed.

Share your experience on social media. A new plant-based recipe, a shop that sells sustainable items, events and resources, will all contribute to the overall awareness and behaviour change and will help us do better.

Don't forget to tag us @OxfordEnvSust.