

## A Smaller Footprint

Our planet is suffering from mankind's pollution, plundering of natural resources, and ecosystem devastation. Attempts to reduce your environmental footprint can seem hopeless compared to pollution levels from megacorporations like Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola's pollution levels are "equivalent to covering 83 football pitches... 10cm deep each day." (Laville) It's enough to convince anyone to give up, but we owe it to our planet and to ourselves to keep trying! I've got a few unusual suggestions that will make your life a little more eco-friendly, especially if your area doesn't offer recycling. Regular items like old mason jars, used boxes, and even unfashionable clothing can be rescued from the trash and reused in diverse - but simple - ways.

Mason jars were a staple in our grandmothers' generation. They used them mostly for canning, but there are some clever ways we can reuse them today. If you buy pickles, spaghetti sauce, or olives, start keeping the mason jar when you would have otherwise thrown it away. Cleaned up, these jars can be used for nearly anything! They are useful for putting things in (Food52), such as colored pencils, coins, knitting needles, or flowers. Save your plastic Tupperware from tomato stains by putting your spaghetti leftovers in a mason jar instead, and it's already packed for lunch! It's also pretty trendy to use a mason jar as an iced coffee cup, and you can buy the lids with metal straws nearly anywhere online. Plus, there's always going to be a bride who needs 150 mason jars so she can place floating votives in them on her wedding day. The lids may need a little extra cleaning, but you can always toss them if they get too rusty; because by that point, you'll have a large collection of them! Saving and reusing mason jars will cut down on your consumption of plastics, such as Tupperware, and reduce the market demand.

Used boxes are a bit more straightforward. To get some, simply go shopping online, or ask the liquor store if they have any spares you can take. Use these old boxes to help you move instead of spending hundreds of dollars on new boxes! You can create shelving (Homes+), or beautiful storage bins. Big boxes become bedside tables, tiny boxes become jewelry boxes. Put all your cleaning products in one medium-sized box instead of a caddy, or stack your recycling in it so it's easier to take everything outside at once. Plus, you'll always need to save a stack of them for the holidays, so you can ship presents to the people you love. This will reduce the amount of trees cut down for cardboard, which will in turn reduce the devastation of their local ecosystems. Hopefully, the decreased demand for cardboard will also encourage companies to recycle theirs more faithfully.

Donating old clothes is not as straightforward as one might expect, since they're usually worn through or unfashionable. Apparently, "only about 20% of clothing... donated is sold by the donation organization." (Zepeda) Therefore, don't use them as clothes! Turn your favorite t-shirt into a pillow, or stretch it over a frame and hang it as art. (Wackerman) You can also cut them into pieces and turn them into a quilt or a rag rug, or get super trendy and make a shirt sleeve into a mason jar koozie. Long socks are very easy to turn into a heating pad: just add rice, a bit of moisture, and microwave! Animal shelters also accept old clothing, blankets, and towels to use as bedding material, giving the animal a feeling of home and reducing their overhead. It's also important to be more eco-conscious when shopping for clothing in the future. Look for companies that advertise "sustainable" or "ethical" clothing (Davies and Ocbania), or check online to find a few good lists ([goodonyou.eco](http://goodonyou.eco)). This will reduce your part in the fashion industry's dizzying life cycle of workroom to landfill, and often these "slow fashion" items are timeless, ensuring that you will be able to wear them for many years.

It's nearly impossible to convince incorporated golf courses to reduce their water consumption, or the government to subsidize electric cars for every citizen, or Coca-Cola from producing so much plastic. Pollution from companies and governments is so rampant that it may feel like any attempts to help the planet are hopeless. It is possible, however, to take charge of your individual impact by reusing mason jars, old cardboard, and clothing. The current consumption-driven economy won't make it easy or cheap to buy less plastic, cut down fewer trees, and buy sustainable fashion, but these are three important steps to reducing mankind's footprint on our home planet. We've only got the one!

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