



**Green
Gift Cards**[®]
a *livewire* brand

A-Z of sustainability

A guide to how members can be
more sustainable in the workplace
and at home



There are plenty of ways you can help be more sustainable at home and in the workplace. We've put together an A-Z list of sustainability to help you. From simple changes you can make as a business or individual to information surrounding policies and governance and businesses that can help you on your journey towards being more sustainable.

A - ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

From bamboo toothbrushes to stainless steel lunch boxes, plenty of businesses are out there providing alternative materials for your everyday products. So, swap out your plastic bags with a cotton bag to collect your groceries or opt for a reusable 100% food-safe silicone coffee cup instead.

There is even an alternative for your trainers these days with runners made of wool. Putting in a bit of time to research your favourite products to see if there is a sustainable alternative is a great idea and can save you some money, too, as these products will often last longer

B - BALANCE

To achieve a more sustainable world, we need to balance environmental, social and economic factors. This means we need to consume our natural resources at a sustainable rate, achieve social well-being, and use our resources far more efficiently to produce an operational profit.

True sustainability balances people, profits and our planet.

C - CLOTHING

With more and more coverage surrounding the environment, plastic pollution, and the climate change crisis, it's no wonder businesses have started to produce sustainable clothing too.

As a resistance to 'fast fashion' (and therefore, disposable fashion), companies producing sustainable alternatives are popping up everywhere, helping



individuals to reduce their carbon footprint whilst looking good at the same time. It's a win-win!

You may even consider reuse rather than recycle. With emerging marketplaces such as Vinted, there are many ways to give clothes a second life.

D - DIET

Vegetarian and vegan diets are rising in popularity year on year. With awareness campaigns such as Veganuary and supermarkets increasing the availability of meat-free alternatives, people now have access to better food choices that positively impact both people and nature, and therefore, our planet. A continued dependence on unsustainably produced items has a harmful impact on our environment.

You don't have to cut out meat or dairy completely; just be a bit more mindful about where your food is coming from. Try shopping locally, buy organic or have a least one meat-free meal a week. If we all make small changes like these in our daily choices, it can have a significant impact on the sustainability of our planet.

E - EARTH HOUR

On Saturday 27th March 2021, Millions of people around the world turned off their lights for an hour to support our planet. Earth hour was introduced in 2007 by WWF and originated in Sydney, Australia and has now become one of the world's largest grassroots movements with people all over the world showing collective support.

The mission is to drive real change and awareness towards a future supporting positive environmental impact. Everyone is invited, so check out earthhour.org for more information.



F - FOSSIL FUELS

When fossil fuels are burned, they release vast amounts of carbon dioxide into our environment, which is a major contributor to global warming. This poses a huge risk to our planet; as the earth continues to warm, it will lead to rising sea levels, more frequent extreme weather, biodiversity loss and species extinction.

We all know that creating energy from fossil fuels is bad for our planet. That's why government and world organisations have and continue to invest in sustainable solutions and are slowly switching towards renewable energy and efficiency. Whilst there is still some work to be done, we're moving towards a more positive future where fossil fuels are no longer impacting our environment. Where does your business or domestic energy come from?

G - GIFTING

Well, we can't very well write an A to Z without mentioning gifting!

Historically, gifting means more stuff, which leads to more plastic and waste and more emissions generated from manufacturing.

Luckily, brands are making the change and are responding to consumer demand for more sustainable and eco-friendly gifting, including zero-waste and recyclable products. Making small changes as an individual consumer can have a significant impact on the planet.

So why not opt for a sustainable gift, or even a Plastic Free green gift card, made from recyclable and compostable paperboard material - a perfect gift for a loved one whilst minimising waste.

H - HOMEMADE

You don't have to just go sustainable with your gifting; why not try DIY homemade products for around the home.



We've all heard of upcycling - the perfect way to start your sustainable journey. There are plenty of crafts and DIY sources on the internet with nifty little tricks to help you create homemade goodies.

From baskets made from newspapers, DIY lunch bags, or crochet washcloths - there are so many cool, homemade products you can make from your very own home.

I - INSULATION

Insulation not only keeps us warm in the winter and cool in the summer but also is a key sustainable component of building design. It reduces our energy bills, which is fab for our bank balances, whilst also reducing our carbon emissions.

Insulation is usually found in your walls, up in the roof and sometimes in your floors too. It plays such a key role in reducing energy waste and helps lower carbon dioxide levels that the government offers free heating or insulation grants for those who need it. Is your house or commercial building effectively insulated?

J - JUST IN TIME

Just-in-time emerged in the Japanese manufacturing industry in the 1960s. With Toyota as the pinnacle case study, it was a strategy used by them and other businesses to increase efficiency and reduce waste for a more sustainable production line, therefore reducing the cost of inventory as businesses only made what they needed and used the process to forecast requirements as accurately as possible.

Now more commonly known as lean manufacturing, just in time strategies allow businesses to reduce their inventories and enhance cash flow for a more sustainable and efficient operational process, from start to end consumer. So, for example, why not order your gift cards using the same principle - order what you need to replace what you've sold - why hold millions of cards in stock and tie up that cash, take up space and require double transport handling.



K - KNOW YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

With the introduction of ESG, companies are under pressure from governments, investors and stakeholders to be more transparent in sharing information about their supply chain. As a result, businesses have more insight into their own supply chain management, leading to them being more efficient and identifying ways to be more sustainable.

To create a sustainable supply chain, a company will need to have complete visibility into the whole lifecycle from design and development to material selection, to manufacturing, packaging and transportation all the way to the end-user and then end of life management.

That way, you can measure the environmental impact, risk and waste costs throughout to improve efficiency and create a more environmentally friendly process for your business.

L - LIGHTS

Lighting is one of the most expensive parts of a building's annual electricity use. Not only that, but they also account for around 15% of energy in the home and around 25% for commercial buildings.

Today, most of our electricity is still supplied through fossil fuels; therefore, lighting is responsible for a large percentage of carbon dioxide emissions. Therefore, it's important to find alternative solutions to your lighting and energy needs.

There are plenty of solutions to help reduce the energy your lights use, including switching to LED lights or investing in automatic lighting or dimmers. But there are also energy companies out there who offer a green energy alternative, along with smart metres, so you can monitor your consumption and adapt usage for a more sustainable lighting solution.



M - MEAT

We talked about diet previously, but it's important to touch a little bit on meat, particularly the manufacturing and production within the meat industry.

Most 'industrial' meat is mass-produced in factory farms, which produces over half the amount of carbon emissions as fossil fuel giants such as BP and Shell, and more than all car exhaust emissions combined. Not only that, but meat production requires a vast amount of land for cattle to grow and graze and, therefore, contributes to the large amounts of deforestation, particularly in South America.

Eating less meat or being more mindful of where the meat you buy is produced can significantly impact the environment. Try buying local, sustainably sourced, or organic fresh meat when you can and try to reduce your consumption once a week.

N - NATURAL ALTERNATIVES

A lot of the products we use in our daily lives are full of chemicals that aren't great for our health or the environment. Thankfully, there are plenty of natural alternatives we can turn to that have a positive impact on our daily routines or even DIY homemade products we can make instead, reducing the chemicals in our environment as well as the plastic packaging they are sold in.

Use white vinegar and lemon as a natural scented solution for cleaning items around the home or organic-based hair or skincare products. Replace tea bags with loose tea, use natural fibre cloths for your kitchen.

There are plenty of options out there if you do some research.

O - OFFSETTING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

As we continue to confront the need to reduce our carbon emissions to prevent further damage to the climate, more and more people are coming up with ways to offset their carbon footprint.



Carbon offsetting simply means investing in environmental projects to balance out your own carbon footprint. There are projects based worldwide, particularly in developing countries, that reduce future emissions from clean energy technologies to planting a tree. Often these projects will provide you with a tool that allows you to calculate your carbon footprint.

These tools take into account your household or business energy usage, travel including cars, vans, motorbikes, public transport and flights, as well as any other purchase you make from food and drink to computers and IT equipment. It then tells you your footprint, so you can then work out what you need to invest in order to offset it.

If you are interested in calculating your carbon footprint, you can do so with our partners, Climate Hero, [here](#).

P - PACKAGING OPTIONS

Sustainable packaging doesn't just mean that the material used is environmentally friendly or recyclable. To have truly sustainable packaging means that sourcing, designing and the use of that packaging has a minimal impact on the environment.

Sustainable packaging is becoming a higher priority for both brands and consumers. Only a few years ago, Amazon was packing their boxes filled with plastic, but now they protect the goods inside with recyclable paper instead. As we move away from plastic, there are plenty of options, including cardboard, paper, bio poly - there's even packaging made from banana peels that you can throw on your compost.

Businesses need to consider what materials they use, the production process, supply chain, carbon footprint and the lifecycle and reusability of that packaging to strive for sustainable packaging options.

Q - QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

We've all heard of the term 'quality over quantity', and this is even more relevant when we're talking about sustainability. When it comes to making the



change towards a more sustainable future, individuals and businesses alike want to feel that their choices can make a difference.

With so many choices to make, from reducing your plastic consumption, to changing your diet and fashion to switching to natural products, it can be challenging to know where to start.

That's why if we focus on quality over quantity, it simplifies the process—allowing people to strip back and make a bigger and more profound impact. But unfortunately, consumerism has led us to believe that buying in volume is cheaper and saves us money in the long term. But that couldn't be further from the truth.

Instead, the goal should be to reduce consumption and focus on quality foods, clothing, and high-quality products built for longevity, health, and, therefore, sustainability.

R - REUSE, REDUCE, RECYCLE

Many brands and governments have used the three R's to encourage the population to move towards a more environmentally friendly way of living.

They are simple tactics we can all use in our daily lives that can help make a difference. The waste hierarchy - reuse, reduce and recycle - helps to protect the environment and conserve resources. Reduce your consumption levels, reuse materials more than once where you can to avoid waste. If you do throw away, recycle so that the product can be made into something else, rather than be added to a landfill and incinerated, both of which are bad for the environment.

S - SOLAR ENERGY

Solar has been around for a while, turning light and heat from the sun into energy to heat our homes or businesses. It is one of the few genuinely renewable energy sources that help reduce electricity bills, reduce the use of fossil fuels and can be used across a number of diverse applications.



Whilst solar energy is heavily weather dependent; it still has a significant environmental impact on the planet. In 2020, global use of renewable energy in electricity generation reached 28%, driven mainly by an increase in solar PV. We only expect this to increase as we replace renewable energy with fossil fuels.

T - TRAVEL

Any form of travel that isn't electric, whether that's in your car, taking the bus or flying to another country, releases harmful CO2 emissions into the environment. Aviation alone counts for up to 75% of the industries greenhouse gas emissions.

Travellers need to be more aware of the pollution levels caused by travelling and how it can impact wildlife and the environment. It also affects local people and their cultures.

To travel more sustainably, you need to consider the effects on the environment from travelling along with the effects on businesses and the people. Some suggestions are to seek out hotels and restaurants that are built from sustainable materials, look for opportunities to contribute to local businesses and community tourism projects and use the money to contribute to the local economy. Or opt for a video call instead of travelling. This is the norm since the pandemic.

U - UNITED NATIONS

In 2015 the UN committed itself to 17 goals, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals include ending extreme poverty, providing better healthcare and education and achieving equality.

Clean energy and water were also amongst their targets to provide more renewable, affordable energy and protect people against disease. Furthermore, with the world becoming increasingly urbanised, they also committed to creating sustainable cities, including affordable and safe housing, transport systems and reducing the adverse per capita environmental impact by 2030.



V - VEHICLE USE

Many of us use our vehicles habitually, whether that's to do the school run, drive to work or even just to pop to the shops. But unfortunately, vehicle use in this way isn't always the most cost-effective or environmentally friendly.

It is estimated that 85% of the CO2 emissions produced over a car's lifespan comes from fuel use and servicing operations. In addition to this, the industry consumes large amounts of raw materials and huge amounts of waste.

The EU and the UK government have introduced new measures to reduce emissions, but there are still things we can do as individuals or businesses. For example, accelerating gently in traffic and not revving your engine along with keeping tyres properly inflated are small ways you can reduce your fuel use and damage to the environment.

Businesses can promote car share, and we can all look to purchase EV's and hybrids that release fewer emissions into the environment.

W - WASTE MINIMISATION

Every business and individual produces waste. Waste minimisation or reduction can help reduce the significant quantities of waste that is sent to landfills and polluting our nature and oceans

Waste minimisation isn't about recycling your waste but limiting the amount of waste produced in the first place. Key tips from experts suggest thinking before you throw something out - can someone else make use of it, can it be used for a different purpose? For example, shredded paper could be used as packaging. Try buying reusable bottles/cups or non-plastic grocery bags or shopping second hand/donating goods to charity. Little changes can make a big difference.

X - XENOBIOTICS

Xenobiotics are chemical substances found within an organism that is not naturally produced or expected to be there. Unfortunately, environmental



contamination by xenobiotics has spread worldwide as a result of urbanisation and population growth.

These unnatural substances are found within our waters and in pollution and have a massive impact on our natural ecosystem. To reduce xenobiotic exposure, we can reduce plastic consumption, buy plants and plant trees that can help keep the air cleaner and try to apply sustainable practices on a daily basis.

Y - YIELD OF PRODUCT

Businesses are constantly assessing their productivity levels which are measured by comparing the ratio between the number of finished products and the resources used to create the products. The product yield measures how many of those products reach the optimal quality to be sold.

The process calculates how many units a business needs to create to deliver a specific number of goods. To be sustainable in production processes, the aim is to reduce waste whilst increasing the yield and efficiency.

Traditionally, any waste produced before the final product is sent out to the customer has ended up in landfills. Now, businesses are coming up with new ways to reduce waste and production by-products or reuse that waste whilst increasing the product output - which is much better for the environment.

Z - ZERO WASTE

The concept of zero waste takes recycling and reusing one step further to consider the entire lifecycle of a product, from design to consumer use.

A growing number of people are joining the zero-waste movement, with many people reducing their waste, adopting minimalist lifestyles, and putting all the rubbish they produce in a year in one jar.

There are 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic waste estimated to be in our oceans. Not only that, but on average, around 40% of food purchased is wasted.



Fortunately, there are simple ways to lower your waste and hopefully save you money too.

Organise your fridge regularly and make a list when food shopping to prevent buying things you don't need, be wary of bulk buying discounts; you may end up throwing things away. Be creative in using leftovers or cook in a big batch and freeze it.

You can also bring your own cotton bags to shop with and try picking fruit and veg that aren't already wrapped in plastic.

Some food delivery boxes opt for minimal waste when sending out food, and companies like Odd Box London deliver fruit and veggies that would otherwise have been thrown away.

The bigger picture

There are plenty of ways you can make small changes that will have a big impact on the environment when enough of us do it. However, it's always worth remembering that true sustainability isn't just about recycling; it's about the processes from start to finish. Putting in some time to research companies you're buying from and their methods of production and waste management, as well as their impact on social, economic and environmental factors, can help inform you on making more sustainable choices.