



Using Water Efficiently: Ideas for Residences

Efficient water use can have major environmental, public health, and economic benefits by helping to improve water quality, maintain aquatic ecosystems, and protect drinking water resources. Efficient use of water, through behavioral, operational, or equipment changes, if practiced broadly can help mitigate the effects of drought. Efficiency measures can also save the homeowner money on their water and energy bills. This list of measures is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather a starting point. Other sources of information on water efficiency are available through EPA's web site (<http://www.epa.gov/OWM/genwave.htm>), and innumerable other sources, some of which may be accessed through the EPA web site, or through WaterWiser, The Water Efficiency Clearinghouse (<http://www.waterwiser.org>).

Bathroom — where over half of all water use inside a house takes place:

- Do not let the water run while shaving or brushing teeth.
- Take short showers instead of tub baths. Turn off the water while soaping or shampooing.
- If you must use a tub, close the drain before turning on the water and fill the tub only half full. Bathe small children together.
- Never use your toilet as a waste basket.

Kitchen and Laundry — simple practices that save a lot of water:

- Keep drinking water in the refrigerator instead of letting the faucet run until the water is cool.
- Wash fruits and vegetables in a basin. Use a vegetable brush.
- Do not use water to defrost frozen foods; thaw in the refrigerator overnight.
- Scrape, rather than rinse, dishes before loading into the dishwasher; wash only full loads.
- Add food wastes to your compost pile instead of using the garbage disposal.
- Wash only full loads of laundry or use the appropriate water level or load size selection on the washing machine.

Equipment — homes with high-efficiency plumbing fixtures and appliances save about 30% of indoor water use and yield substantial savings on water, sewer, and energy bills:

- Consider purchasing high-efficiency toilets, or place a plastic container filled with water in the tank of your conventional toilet. Be sure it does not interfere with operation of the toilet's flush mechanisms.
- Install low-flow faucet aerators and showerheads.
- Consider purchasing a high efficiency washing machine which can save over 50% in laundry water and energy use.
- Repair all leaks. A leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons per day. To detect leaks in the toilet, add food coloring to the tank water. If the colored water appears in the bowl, the toilet is leaking. Toilet repair advice is available at www.toiletology.com/index.shtml.