

# Water Use Checklist

There are a number of simple steps that homeowners can take to reduce home water use without significant upfront investment.

## ***Audit your Water Use***

### **Home water audit**

To conduct a home water audit yourself, or with help from a professional, consult your utility company. Many water providers will conduct home water audits for free or will provide you with home water audit kits at little or no cost! If using instructions from the Internet, be sure the source is reputable and trustworthy.

### **Monitor your water bills**

Monitor your water bill for unusually high use. Your bill and water meter are tools that can help you discover leaks.

## ***Fix Leaks***

### **Indoor leaks**

You can significantly reduce water use by simply repairing leaks or drips in fixtures -faucets and showerheads-or pipes. Also, if your water heater's tank leaks, you may need a [new water heater](#)

### **Outdoor leaks**

Don't forget to periodically check the outdoor hoses, sprinklers, and faucets for leaks. Also, remember to keep the sprinkler heads in good shape.

## ***Smarter Appliances and Fixtures***

### **Fixtures**

[Low flow fixtures](#), including faucet aerators and low-flow showerheads, are generally inexpensive to replace and are one of the most cost-effective water conservation measures. Consider [EPA WaterSense®](#)-labeled aerators, faucets, and showerheads for improved efficiency without sacrificing performance.

## Toilet

Older toilets, manufactured before the 1992 Energy Policy Act mandated more water efficient versions, use up to 3.5 gallons per flush, and are responsible for much of the water wasted in American homes. Consider installing a [WaterSense® labeled toilet](#), which uses less water (a maximum of 1.3 gallons per flush), while offering equal or superior performance.

## Appliances

To save water and energy, consider a high-efficiency [ENERGYSTAR®](#) labeled model when purchasing a new dishwasher or washing machine. Also, consider appliances that offer cycle and load size adjustments, which are more water and energy efficient.

## ***Use Only the Water you Need***

### Everyday activities

Always use only the water you need. Do not let faucets or sprinklers run unnecessarily. For instance, turn the water off while you brush your teeth or shave. Also, when washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run while rinsing.

### Appliance use

Wash only full loads in your dishwasher and washing machine; or set the water level for the size of your load, if possible, to use less water.

## ***Reuse Water***

### Water reuse in the home

Don't pour water down the drain when there may be another use for it. For instance, when you give your pet fresh water, reuse the old water for your houseplants.

### Rainwater collection

[Rain barrels](#) are mosquito-proof containers that collect and store rainwater that would otherwise wind up in storm drains and streams. Rain water can be used to irrigate lawn and garden areas, which make up a large amount of total household water use during the summer.

## ✓ **Lawn & Garden with Care**

### ☐ **Lawns**

Reduce the amount of lawn in your yard by re-naturalizing certain areas. For instance, consider lawn alternatives (i.e. native shrubs or groundcover) for steep slopes, isolated strips, shady areas or near streams and lakes, where it takes a lot of extra work to maintain grass.

Only use turf where it aesthetically highlights the house or buildings and where it has practical function, such as in play or recreation areas. Select a type of grass that can withstand drought periods and become dormant during hot, dry seasons.

### ☐ **Plantings**

Plant native or drought tolerant grasses, ground covers, shrubs, and trees. Group plants with similar watering needs together to avoid overwatering some while underwatering others. Also, use a layer of organic mulch around plants to reduce evaporation, retain moisture, reduce weed growth, and save water, time and money.

### ☐ **Watering practices**

Water your lawn during the coolest part of the day; and don't water your lawn on windy days when most of the water blows away or evaporates. Also, avoid overwatering. Most of the year, lawns only need one inch of water per week, and a heavy rain eliminates the need for watering for up to two weeks. Apply water only as fast as the soil can absorb it.

### ☐ **Irrigation system**

Use soaker hoses or drip irrigation for shrubs and trees to apply water directly to the roots where it's needed. If you decide to use a sprinkler, look for models that produce droplets, not mist, and set them to water lawns and gardens only. Also, install a [rain sensor](#) on any automatic irrigation so your system won't run when it's raining.

## ✓ **Outdoor Activities:**

### ☐ **Pool and recreation**

Install a water-saving pool filter. When backflushing your pool, consider using the water on your landscaping. Also, try to cover pools and spas to reduce evaporation of water.

Avoid using recreational water toys and ornamental water features (i.e. fountains) that require a constant stream of water, unless they use recycled water.

**Car washing**

Use a commercial car wash that recycles water. If you wash your own car, use a shut-off nozzle that can be adjusted down to a fine spray on your hose, or use water from a bucket.