



Sustainability

A Way of Living

Introduction

Sustainability is not just a big word we hear in classrooms, social media, or see in headlines, but a way of living. It's about the choices we make every day, from the water we save to the waste we reduce, and even the kindness we show to the environment around us.

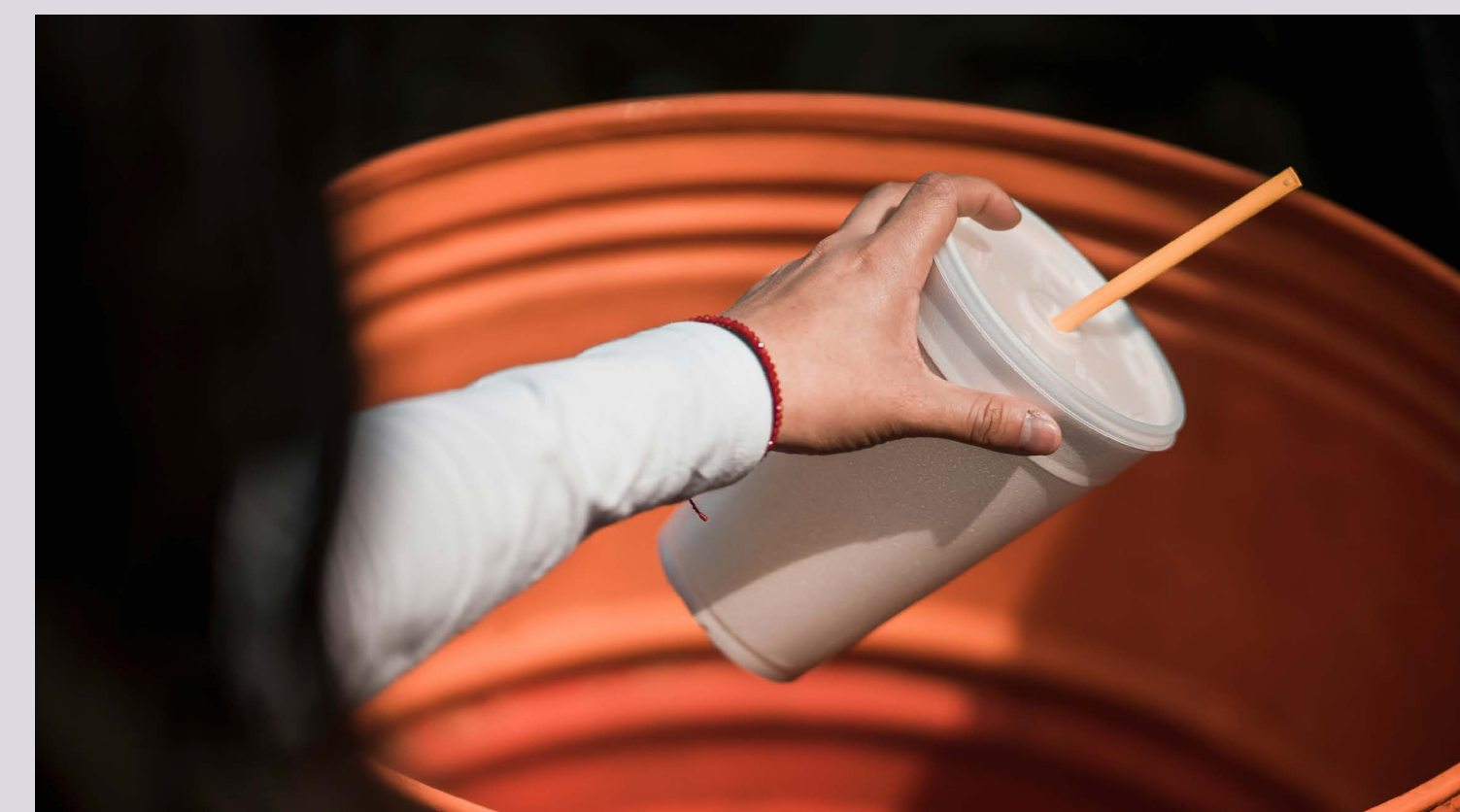
As students, it might not always feel like our actions make a difference. But they do. Every reusable bottle, and every bike ride, every shared effort builds a stronger community. Sustainability begins with one person but grows through many, shaping our campus, our cities, and eventually, our world.

The truth is, living sustainably is an investment in the future that our next generation will thank us for. It's not a trend. It's a habit of awareness, care, and responsibility. By living this way today, we create the promise of a better tomorrow. This handbook brings these ideas together, helping each of us understand how small and mindful choices can lead to a big impact.

Here you'll find simple ways to make your lifestyle more sustainable using the three golden 'R's' (reduce, reuse and recycle) and tips for reducing waste, saving energy, protecting biodiversity, and living more responsibly on campus and beyond.



Recycle smart. Your rubbish matters.



The first step of sustainability is to know where to put your rubbish in order to cause the least possible damage to the environment. Recycling properly is the least time-consuming way of being sustainable, and easy to start. You just need to be open-minded. Most of us think we know how to recycle, but a lot of the time we get it wrong. That's why it's so important to have proper information about disposing your waste.

Separating recyclable vs non-recyclable items:

- Reduces landfill waste
- Saves natural resources
- Supports circular economy

What can be recycled – and how – varies from borough to borough. Click [here](#) to check if you are putting things in the right bin.

This helpful website gives you essential information on:

[How to recycle and what you can recycle at your home \(enter your postcode to find out\)](#)

[Where you can recycle things that don't go in your home \(kerbside\) recycling](#)

[Why contamination is bad and how to avoid it](#)

Make reusing a habit. Give materials a second life.

Many people still hesitate to use second-hand things, thinking they are old or less valuable. But every reused item carries a story, and a choice to protect our planet. When we give things a new purpose and turn one item into another, or reuse instead of replacing, we help to break that stigma and build a culture of care and creativity. Choosing second-hand isn't about having less, it's about doing more for the world we share. Reusing items is also a great way to save money.

1. Shopping second-hand and at charity shops

- Reduces fast fashion waste
- Extends the life of clothes and other items
- Is cheaper for students
- Supports charities

Common charity shops in the UK

- Oxfam
- British Heart Foundation
- Cancer Research UK
- Sue Ryder

Click the [link](#) to search a charity shop near your place. You can both buy and donate things in these charity shops. presence on websites like eBay.



2. Donating your unwanted belongings

Donating the things which are no longer useful for you might be just what somebody else is after - one person's trash can be another person's treasure! This won't just have an impact on humanity and the environment but also will create space in your storage - handy in a small student room!

Donating good-quality belongings:

- Keeps items out of landfill
- Supports people in need, or who are shopping second-hand to support the environment
- Encourages responsible decluttering

Where to donate:

- Charity shops
- Clothes banks
- University donation drives - You can find donation boxes near the Docklands halls of residence (British Heart Foundation)

You can also sell good quality items on apps like Vinted, Depop and eBay.

3. Repurposing everyday items

Repurposing items might sound like a lot of work, but it doesn't have to be! This practice is very easy to learn - all it takes is a bit of creative thinking. It's a great way to reduce your environmental impact and your spending, as well as to think creatively.

This [video](#) gives some great suggestions for ways to get started.

4. Invest in reusable items

Our final suggestion requires an upfront cost, but will pay off over time. Using things like reusable coffee cups and shopping bags will not only reduce waste going to landfill, but save you money over time. Many coffee shops offer discounts for using your own cup, so you can feel good about saving the planet and your money.



Reduce - use less. Make every choice count.

Reducing means using only what you need and avoiding things you will quickly throw away. It can be as simple as eating what you already have at home, not wasting food, and choosing meals with less packaging. When you walk, cycle, share lifts, or use buses and trains instead of going everywhere by car, you also reduce pollution.

Small changes like avoiding single-use items, printing only when necessary, or sharing and borrowing instead of buying new can cut a lot of hidden waste. Reducing may feel invisible at first, but it is the strongest step of the three 'R's', because the best waste is the waste that never exists in the first place.



Eat sustainably

The way we shop, eat and store our food has a big impact on the environment, which means there are many changes we can make to have a positive difference.

Reducing food waste

- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions from food in landfill
- Can help to save money on food
- Lowers carbon footprint from food production

The first step of reducing food waste is planning your meals carefully. Think about:

- What's already in your fridge, freezer and cupboards. Write it all down before writing your shopping list, and build your meals around using those up.

- What you'll actually want to cook – not just what you fancy eating. Don't shop for elaborate meals that you won't have the energy to cook on the day.
- How leftover ingredients can be repurposed into another meal. If you bought spinach for one meal, how can you use the rest of the bag before it goes bad?
- The use by dates of ingredients, in relation to when you plan to eat the meal. Frozen or canned goods can be helpful in this regard.

If you find it hard to keep track of what's in your fridge, an app to help you manage what's in your storage might be the way to go. Consider trying [Kitche](#), [No Waste](#) or [Fridgely](#).



Upcycling Food

Using up food items that are usually considered to be a waste product. Like vegetables peels to crisps, fruits peels to make tea and using food waste as compost or fertilizers for plants.

[Watch this YouTube video for inspiration](#)

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Reducing commercial food waste

Try apps which help you 'rescue' surplus food from shops, cafes and restaurants at low prices.

Download [Too Good To Go](#) or [Karma](#). [Olio](#) is also a good place to find free food from local businesses and neighbours. There are also other businesses like [Oddbox](#) which exist to reduce commercial waste. Oddbox sells fruit and veg boxes made up of surplus or imperfect produce that might have otherwise been wasted. It's a slightly more expensive option, but an excellent one for people serious about saving the planet (and trying new vegetables!).





Shopping local

It's best for the environment to buy seasonal fruit and veg grown in the UK. That means it doesn't have to be shipped over from other countries, causing lots of emissions in the process. You can even go a step further... Perhaps try to grow your own food items, where space permits! It's easy to grow things like chillis and herbs in small places like windowsills.

Plant-based diet

Eating predominantly a plant based diet can save money as well as have a positive impact on the planet.

Travel sustainably

Travel sustainably means choosing ways of moving that are kinder to the planet, your wallet, and your body. Whether it is cycling, walking, or using public transport, these options create less pollution and help keep the air cleaner for everyone.

Cycling

- Zero carbon emissions
- Reduces traffic and air pollution
- Improves physical and mental health
- Cheaper than cars or taxis

Free bike training and rentable bikes make cycling an easy, low-cost way to travel more sustainably. Programmes like [Cycle Confident](#) offer free courses to help you feel safe and confident on the road, whether you are a complete beginner or getting back on a bike.

In London, schemes such as [Santander Cycles](#) let you rent a bike for short trips, so you do not need to own one to enjoy the benefits of cycling.

Using [road safety advice](#) and [theft-prevention tips](#) from trusted organisations helps you ride safely, protect your bike, and make cycling a regular part of your everyday life.

Public transport and walking

- Lower carbon emissions than cars
- Affordable for students
- Reduces congestion and pollution

Public transport and walking are easy ways to get around that use far less energy than driving and help keep the air cleaner. They are usually cheaper for students, cut congestion on the roads, and make cities safer and calmer. Apps like [Google Maps](#), [Citymapper](#) and the [TfL Journey Planner](#) can quickly show you the best walking and public transport routes, so choosing the greener option becomes simple.



Consume sustainably. Care for what you have.

Every light you switch off, every shower you shorten and every mindful purchase you make is a step in the right direction for our planet. Consuming sustainably isn't about giving up comfort. It's about choosing enough, saving energy and water, and building habits that keep resources for tomorrow.

Here are some quick actions that can help you be a more sustainable consumer.

Saving gas and electricity

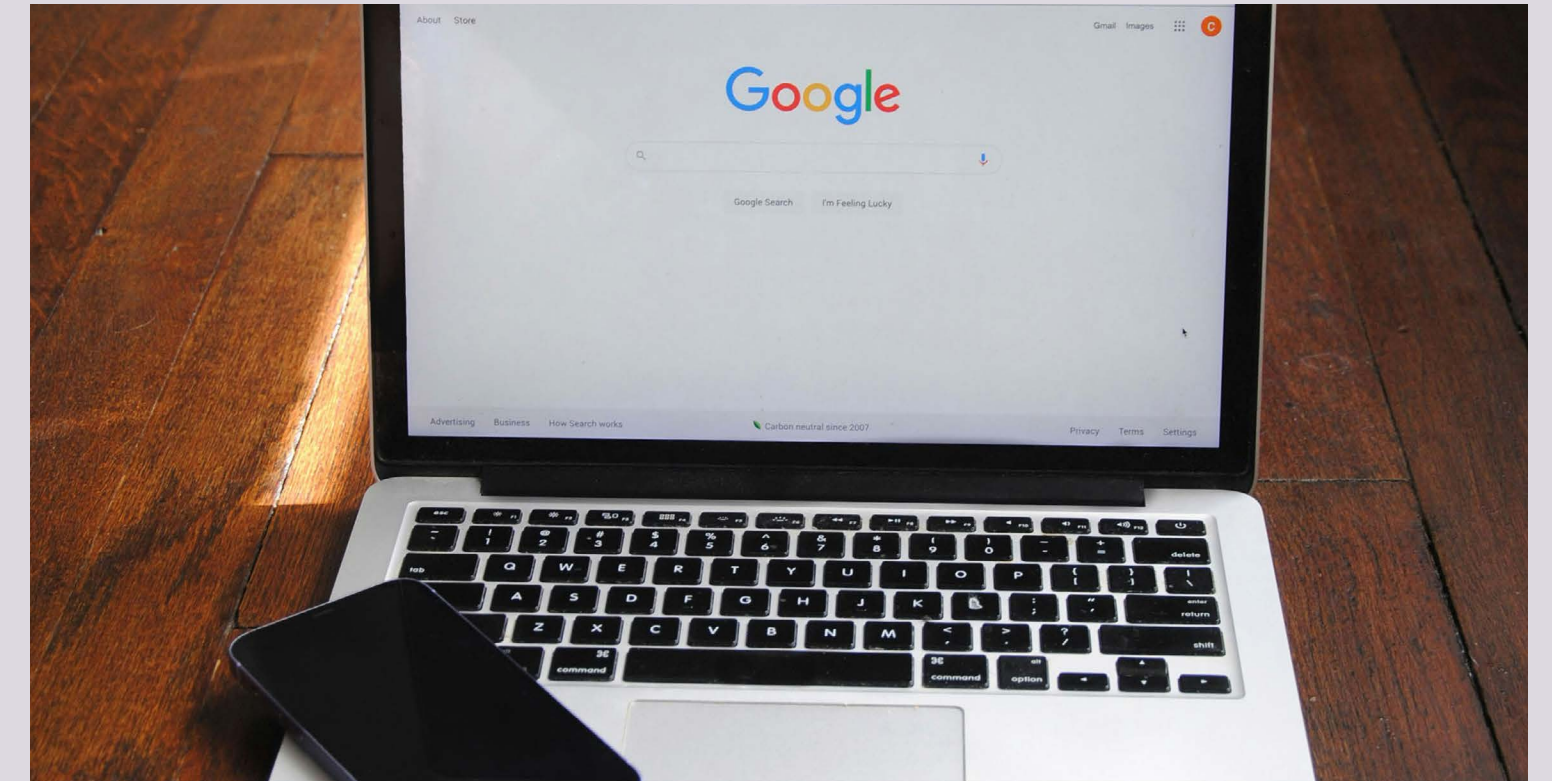
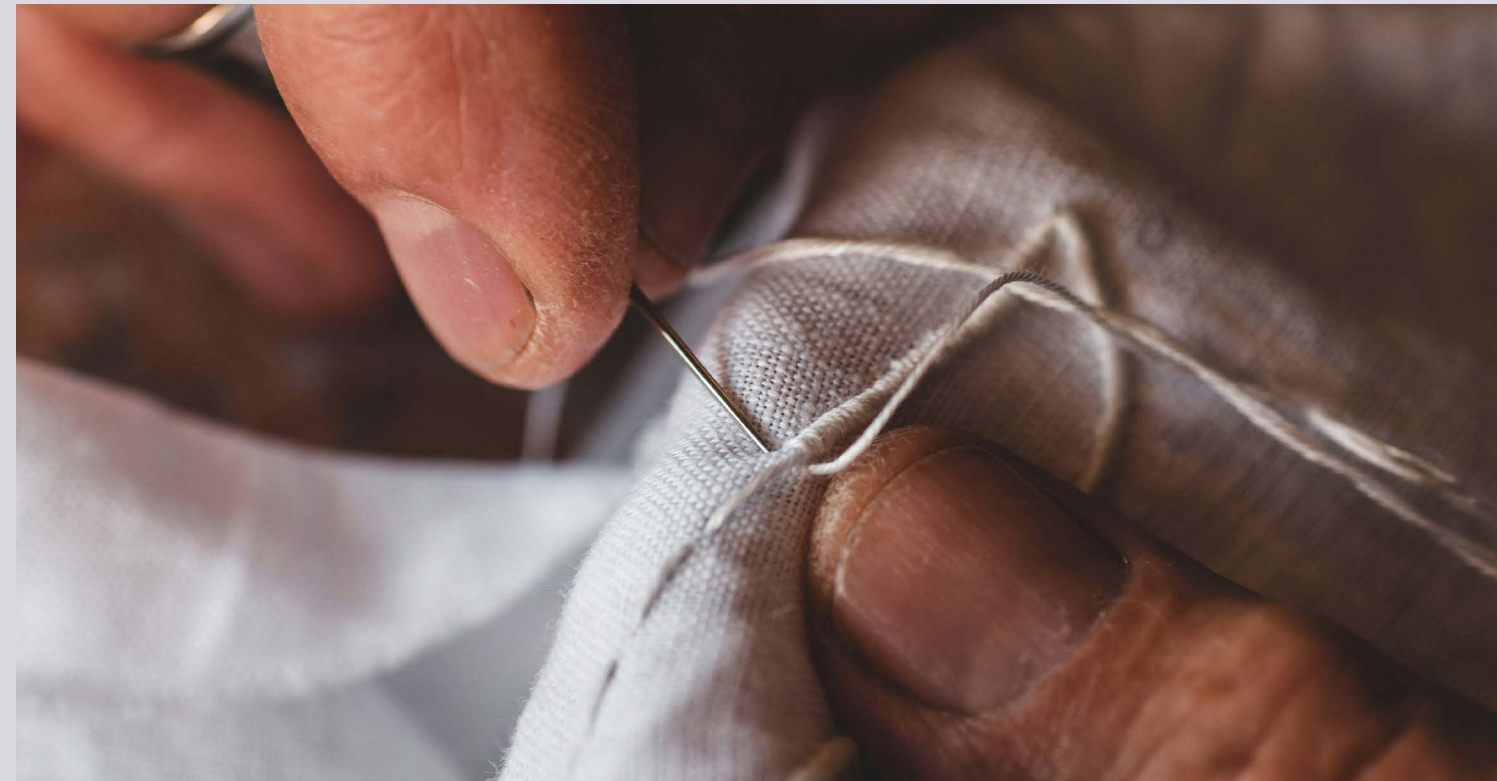
- Layer up before using heating.
- Close doors and windows when heating is on.
- Switch off lights when leaving a room.
- Unplug chargers and electronics when not in use - devices still use power on standby.
- Use LED light bulbs. These use up to 85% less energy than traditional bulbs. Even better, just use natural daylight whenever possible.

- Use washing machines only when full (this also saves water).
- Use eco-mode on appliances.
- Don't overfill kettles.

Saving water

- Turn off the tap while brushing teeth - this saves up to six litres per minute.
- Take shorter showers (five minutes) and choose showers over baths.
- Reuse water where possible - for instance water your plants with an old glass of water instead of pouring it away.





More steps to sustainability

- Avoid fast consumption across all shopping (fashion, homeware, and everyday items) by buying mindfully and using borrowing, sharing or reuse options. Look to see if your local area has a 'library of things' - this is where you can rent out things like tools or tents instead of buying them to use once.
- Don't print if you don't need to.
- Opt out of disposable items when possible, such as cutlery that comes with a takeaway or a paper bag.
- Learn to do basic repairs on clothes so you don't have to buy new ones as regularly.
- Contribute to sustainability initiatives (e.g. tree planting) to reduce your carbon footprint.
- Switch your bank account and bills to providers who have more ethical investments
- In charge of your utility bills? Swap to a more sustainable energy company such as Octopus or Ecotricity.
- Tech-wise, Eco Talk is a green option for your phone bill. Ecosia is also a more sustainable web browser - all the company's profits go towards green initiatives.
- Finally, avoid using AI wherever possible. AI is very bad for the environment due to its high energy and water usage, and rates of pollution. Turn off automatic AI summaries and opt for a search engine (or your own brain!) over AI bots.