

# 5 tips on how to live an eco-friendly life



If you happen to be in charge of one of New Zealand's most polluting businesses, could you please cut that out?

But if you're a regular, pavlova-loving, jandal-wearing Kiwi, your contributions to the environmental effort might not be quite so large – but that doesn't mean they're any less worthy, helpful, or important.

To make a real impact on reducing our carbon footprints, we all need to make changes, even to those little everyday

things that don't feel like they do much. Because if we all do it, it's going to make a big difference.

So here are five totally achievable ways we can all live a more eco-friendly lifestyle, and make a real difference over the space of a lifetime.

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## 1. Cut out single-use plastic

Single-use anything is not going to be great for the environment, but plastic is not only one of the biggest culprits in the one-off world, it's also one of the worst due to how many resources it takes to create, and how long it takes to break down.

All for a quick drink, or a little convenience at the shops.

Instead, cut it out. Make a habit of carrying a reusable metal straw, utensils, drink bottle, and grocery bag when you go out, even if they live in the car most of the time. Make a note in your takeaway order not to include plastic utensils, and advocate for getting rid of these products in your workplace as well.

In the year from when New Zealand banned plastic bags at supermarkets on 1 July 2019, we collectively saved [1.1 billion](#) plastic bags from going to landfills or the ocean. So if you're ever in doubt about what one person can achieve, don't forget our team of five million and what we can do when we work together.

## 2. Eat less meat (especially red meat!)

As much as [15% of Kiwi adults mostly or always eat a plant-based diet](#), a figure up by 50% in the space of a year. And that's a huge win for the environment.

That's because the thing New Zealand is so good at - livestock farming - is actually not so hot for the environment. Greenhouse gases released by farming are responsible for [roughly half of New Zealand's total greenhouse gas emissions](#).

When you eat less meat and more plant-based food, you're moving your diet to a much more eco-friendly source. In fact, one study found that a global shift to plant-based meals could cut down greenhouse gases caused by [food production by as much as 70%](#).



The good news is that you don't have to give up your steak nights or your bacon on Sunday mornings. Simply eating less of it – having meat-free Mondays at home, trying the veggie option at the restaurant, or giving Beyond Meat a crack in your burger, can really add up.

### 3. Wear sustainable clothing

Fast fashion is the practice of creating a lot of clothing items quickly and cheaply to cater to the demand for the hottest trends right now.

And since trends pass faster than you can say 'low-rise jeans', that means there's an entire industry cranking out clothing items that won't be worn for more than a couple of months.

To be part of the solution, avoid buying these items and creating demand for them. Or at least, avoid buying them brand new – picking them up at a second-hand shop at least doesn't tell the supplier to order more from the manufacturer.



As well as buying second-hand clothing, get into the habit of fixing your clothes rather than throwing them out, attending clothing swaps to freshen up your wardrobe, and when buying new, choosing high-quality materials that will stand the test of time.

### 4. Compost food waste

New Zealand homes throw out [approximately 157.389 tonnes of food waste per year](#). To put that in perspective, that's about enough to feed all of Dunedin for almost three years. That's a lot of hungry students.

Ideally, we'd be much better about only buying what we need, then being much much better about digging into those leftovers rather than ordering takeaways or cooking something new.

But it's also a fact of life that things go off when you're not looking, and no one wants to admit that that Tuesday night stir fry wasn't actually very good and the leftover are less appealing by the day.

By creating your own compost heap at home, you'll be ensuring your food waste isn't adding to greenhouse gas emissions by piling up in landfill, and you'll create a nutritious fertiliser for your garden.



## 5. Use eco-friendly or natural cleaning products

From soaps and cleaners that don't break down very well, to countless plastic bottles that go straight in the recycling once you're finished, our cleaning products can actually be a real source of anti-eco-friendliness. Eco-meanness, you could say.

Instead, search for products that include natural biodegradable ingredients, use products you can refill if you have that service available nearby, and consider using homemade cleaners (baking soda and vinegar work actual miracles) to lessen your reliance on bought products.

These are all great ways to make small changes at home that can make a big difference in protecting our world. And while you're at it, why not make another small change now to protect your own personal world in the future? Taking out [life insurance](#) can help to protect your loved ones financially should the worst happen to you – just don't forget to pass on instructions for how to care for your compost heap as well.



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