

## **Teaching Kids to Think Green**

We live in a culture of convenience that doesn't teach a lot about consequences of our consumerism or environmentally responsible living. Our children won't learn these values by accident. We can teach them at home how to be responsible citizens and aware of the impact they have on the planet they live in. While the consumer-driven media might seem to be against what we want to instill in our children, the best thing is to teach by example. Children will learn what they see lived out, and they all can understand we want our earth to be clean, green, and around for generations to come.

### ***Conservation***

Children can be taught from a very early age the importance of conserving water and electricity. It can be fun to build a cistern to collect rain water together. Water that is captured when it rains can be used to water plants inside.

Get your children involved when you put clothes on the line to dry. Teach them how the sun can help dry the clothes and save a lot of energy that the dryer would use.

You can teach them to only use the water to rinse when they're brushing their teeth and not leave it running. And to turn off lights and appliances when not being used. Entertainment electronics such as DVD or CD players, TVs, and video games can be plugged into a power strip and turned off with one switch when done. Little signs can be placed around the home to remind them to make sure things are turned off when they leave the room.

### ***Recycling***

Kids can really get into helping with your family's recycling process. They need to know why we recycle and what can happen to our environment if we don't. Label bins for your kids to help sort recyclable waste into, such as aluminum, glass, plastic, cardboard, etc. Make it one of their weekly chores to sort items and take them to the curb for pickup or go with you to the local recycling center. That can be a great place for them to see the big picture of how much can be recycled by just one community.

Another great idea to teach kids is to buy products made from recycled materials so that they can see the benefit of post-consumer recycled content products firsthand. There are many products that are made from recycled materials, including paper products and even children's toothbrushes.

Second hand toys and clothing can be just as good as new, but just need to be recycled so they can be enjoyed by new owners. Buying gently used second hand items can save you money and the planet energy and resources needed to manufacture new. Many US cities have a great online program called freecycle, which allows people to post gently used items they no longer need so others who do need them can find them. All they have to do is arrange to pick them up. It's great for the environment, and all free.

Teaching our children to conserve and recycle can make a great impression on them. How great it would be for it to be second nature for them to think of how they impact the planet in everything they do. It all begins at home.