Sustainability Guide
Tips for living sustainably on campus and at home
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In 2017, the University of Waterloo released Policy 53 – Environmental Sustainability and developed its first Environmental Sustainability Strategy. These were important steps towards creating a more sustainable campus, as they established measurable long-term goals and commitments.

Reaching our shared goals will require participation from all members of the campus community, but it can sometimes be intimidating to think about what we should be doing as individuals.

This guide is a resource for how to live, work, and study sustainably at Waterloo. Each section focuses on one of the action areas of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, with specific tips accompanied by a home and/or campus icon and additional resources for your convenience. It is by no means exhaustive! We would encourage you to follow up with online sources of information that are referenced throughout, but these are good tips and resources to start.

We hope you’ll join our efforts.

Easy ways to get involved

**GREEN OFFICE PROGRAM**

[uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/green-office](uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/green-office)

A framework for staff and faculty to lead efforts in their units and be a part of the change they want to see at the University of Waterloo.

**SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATE**

[uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/sustainability-certificate](uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/sustainability-certificate)

A core series of training courses for employees to learn about sustainability, Waterloo’s goals, and individual action.

**SUSTAINABILITY ACTION FUND**

[uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/sustainability-action-fund](uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/sustainability-action-fund)

A central fund to support projects and initiatives that improve sustainability at the University of Waterloo.

**STUDENT GROUPS**

[uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/student-groups](uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/student-groups)

A great way to meet new friends while supporting the University’s sustainability efforts through advocacy, awareness-building, service offerings, or research. Also check out [student clubs](uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/student-groups) and [student services](uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/get-involved/student-groups) through FEDS to learn about some of the other clubs being run on campus.

**MAXIMIZE POTENTIAL**

[uwaterloo.ca/housing/jobs-leadership/opportunities/maximize-potential-certificate-program](uwaterloo.ca/housing/jobs-leadership/opportunities/maximize-potential-certificate-program)

An interactive module within Residence Life’s leadership certificate program to equip you with simple skills for living sustainably on campus.
Climate change is one of the most pressing sustainability challenges, influenced by how we power homes and buildings, get around, and the food we eat. Large institutions have an important role to influence progress and demonstrate leadership.

**OUR GOAL**

Waterloo is developing an action plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

**Tips**

Each of the following sections has tips on how to minimize your direct and indirect contribution to climate change, but it starts with getting informed.

- **Know your footprint:** There are many ways we create greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change, and they aren’t always where you think! Use an online calculator to see where your largest impacts might be:
  - **Direct:** Natural gas, fuel oil, propane, personal vehicles
  - **Indirect:** Electricity, flights, waste, water consumption, food, product purchasing, services

- **Follow research:** Many researchers on campus are directly tackling climate change and related issues such as extreme weather events, tourism, health, affordable energy, transportation, and energy storage.

**Resources**

- **CARBON CALCULATOR**
  Check out the [Carbon Footprint Calculator](http://www.carbonfootprintcalculator.com) if you have details about your energy and fuel consumption, or visit the Global Footprint Network’s [Footprint Quiz](http://www.globalfootprintnetwork.org) if you want a basic understanding of your footprint and Personal Overshoot Day.

- **LOCAL INITIATIVES**
  Visit [ClimateActionWR](http://www.climateactionwr.com) to see what is happening around the community.

- **OVERVIEW VIDEO**
  Learn with [Bill Nye the Science Guy](http://www.billnye.com).
While it’s hard to see, energy is consumed all around us – by our devices, the air we heat or cool, our lights, and more. Reducing wasted energy and using energy more efficiently can save money at home and on campus, while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**OUR GOAL**

Implement cost-effective and practical strategies to reduce or minimize growth in energy use on campus.

**Tips**

Simple ways to reduce your energy consumption include:

- **Unplug unused appliances**: Many devices draw electricity even when they aren’t in use, known as phantom power. Unplug them or use a programmable power bar if possible to reduce unnecessary waste.

- **Use power overnight**: Power is cheaper and cleaner overnight, so doing laundry, running a dishwasher, or even charging your phone between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. is a great idea.

- **Adjust your thermostat**: Lowering your temperature in the winter or raising it in the summer (even by a couple degrees) can have a big impact, especially if you aren’t home!

- **Take shorter showers**: It uses a lot of energy to make hot water, so keeping a shower to 5 minutes is an easy way to reduce your footprint.

- **Seal your windows**: Leaks around windows, doors, and other openings let cold/hot air escape your home, office, or residence. Caulk or weather-strip to plug these holes, and make sure to shut all windows and doors when your air conditioner or furnace are running!

- **Purchase efficient devices**: Look for ENERGYSTAR certified appliances, LED lights, on-demand water heaters, or other devices certified for energy efficiency. It allows you to do the same thing with less power!

**Resources**

**HOME ENERGY EVALUATIONS**

Reep Green Solutions offers professional energy evaluations to provide you with personalized recommendations to make your home more efficient.

**ENERGY COUPONS AND REBATES**

SaveOnEnergy offers many home rebate programs and incentives to increase your home’s energy efficiency.

**FORWARD-THINKING RESEARCH**

The Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy (WISE) and Sustainable Energy Policy are great places to learn more about energy efficiency and conservation.

**LOCAL UTILITIES**

Waterloo North Hydro, Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro, and Energy+ have lots of information about incentives, tools, and programs to save energy.

**TIPS FROM THE GOVERNMENT**

Natural Resources Canada provides good tips and information about home energy efficiency.

**PORTABLE POWER METERS**

Rent them from the Sustainability Office to measure the energy use of specific appliances at home or on campus.
Eating your lunch, purchasing new items, running events, or grabbing a coffee all leave us with leftovers or ‘waste’ that we throw away. This fills up our landfills, uses resources inefficiently, and often pollutes land and water systems. Momentum is building for more circular and long-term use of these resources, and Waterloo is committed to taking action on campus.

**OUR GOAL**

Become a zero waste campus by 2035.

**Tips**

Cut down on unnecessary waste by following some of the tips below:

- **Sort your waste properly:** Ensure you are recycling as much as possible, without contaminating each stream.
  - **GARBAGE:** straws, wrappers, cling wrap, styrofoam, wax paper
  - **ORGANICS:** food scraps, paper towels, paper plates, paper napkins
  - **CONTAINERS:** cans, glass/plastic bottles, cartons, plastic food packages, coffee cups and lids (separated)
  - **PAPERS AND BAGS:** paper, shopping bags, envelopes, newsprint/magazines
  - **OTHER RECYCLING:** e-waste, clothing, batteries, furniture, textbooks

- **Don’t contaminate:** Throwing non-recyclable items into the recycling makes it harder for waste companies to sort, and can result in all of the recycling being thrown out. If you’re not sure, throw it in the garbage!

- **Reduce disposables:** Rather than getting a disposable container for your food and drinks, try bringing a reusable option. Make sure you also bring reusable bags for your shopping, and purchases products with little to no disposable packaging.

- **Print less:** Use digital documents, print double-sided, and reuse paper that’s still good on one side!

**Resources**

**WHAT GOES WHERE**

**Waste Whiz** is a great resource to help you sort waste at home and at school.

**REGIONAL WASTE CALENDAR**

Find out when your garbage and yard waste will be picked up at home.

**LUG-A-MUG**

Save 10 cents on coffee or tea purchases at any Food Services location, Tim Hortons, Williams, or Starbucks on campus when you bring your own mug!

**ECO-CONTAINER**

Save 20 cents by using this reusable take-out container instead of a disposable one. Let Food Services do the dishes!

**SURPLUS SALES**

**Central Stores** holds occasional sales where you can get affordable used furniture, computers, and more!

**CLOTHING SALES**

Sustainable Campus Initiative (SCI) holds a clothing sale once a term – a great opportunity to get affordable used clothing.

**E-WASTE AND BATTERY DROP-OFFS**

Check out the list of drop-off locations on campus to recycle your e-waste and help keep toxic chemicals out of the landfill.

**ZERO WASTE 101**

**Reep Green Solutions** is great local source that outlines basic zero waste practices.
One of the planet’s most important resources is something we use every day for cooking, bathing, washing dishes, brushing teeth, and much more. With limited freshwater resources, the management of water supplies has become a major discussion point for all levels of government around the world. Understanding the small actions you can take to conserve and protect water can help secure the planet’s future water supply.

**OUR GOAL**

Expand stormwater management technologies across campus by 2025, and reduce water intensity by five per cent by 2025.

**Tips**

Become a water conservationist and follow some of the tips below:

- **Be proactive**: Ensure your dishwasher only runs when it’s full, report any leaky faucets in kitchens or bathrooms, and be mindful of how long you run taps. Also remember to run your dishwasher during off-peak hours whenever possible.

- **Watch what you flush**: Keep food and other waste such as plastic and feminine hygiene products out of the toilet.

- **Shower smart**: Keep showers to five minutes or less, and consider installing low flow shower heads. Visit Reep Green Solutions to determine your shower head water flow.

- **Water smart**: During the summer months, lawn watering can place a heavy strain on our water system. Water in the morning or evening, and only on your designated day.

- **Landscape with water in mind**: Plant species of flowers, shrubs, and bushes that can tolerate our local climate zone and require minimal watering, and in strategic locations to soak up water during heavy rains to keep water out of your basement!

- **Use a rain barrel**: Store rainwater in a rain barrel outside your home to use for watering gardens and lawns, and to absorb water during heavy rains.

- **Use water-efficient appliances**: Look for ENERGYSTAR certified dishwashers, laundry machines, and water softeners to use water more efficiently.

**Resources**

**WATER AUDIT**

Take the Wet Challenge water audit offered by the Region of Waterloo to find out how much water you’re using and how you can reduce your consumption.

**RESEARCH NETWORKS**

Stay updated with researchers on campus such as the Water Institute or find out the latest in water research by attending the WaterTalks Series!

**RECIPES**

Many household cleaning solutions can be made at home such as floor cleaners, air fresheners, mirror cleaners, and more. Check out Keeper of the Home to learn how!

**WATER CONSERVATION IN ACTION**

Visit the Environment 3 wetlands to learn more about the importance and function of man-made natural wetlands, and water conservation practices.

**RAIN PROGRAM**

Learn to manage rain on your property with Reep Green Solutions.
A major factor in the design and planning of our cities revolves around modal shifts that will get us out of our cars and into more sustainable modes of transportation. Waterloo supports the use of alternative transportation and offers a wide variety of programs and services that can help you incorporate alternative transportation into your commute.

**OUR GOAL**

Increase walking, cycling, transit, carpooling, or teleworking to 90 per cent in 2025, and increase electric vehicle use on campus.

**Tips**

Use the tips below to become a more sustainable commuter:

- **Walk, bike, and bus to campus**: Try incorporating walking, cycling, or taking transit into your weekly commute, even occasionally. It can help with stress, fitness, your wallet, and the environment!
- **Collaborate when driving**: Instead of taking multiple vehicles to campus, find out who lives in your area and arrange a carpool.
- **Buy efficient**: When looking to purchase a new vehicle, hybrid and electric vehicles are great alternatives to reduce your impact and long-term operating costs, and pay attention to the fuel economy ratings for internal combustion vehicles.
- **Drive efficiently**: Rapid acceleration and braking consumes most of your car’s energy, so accelerate smoothly. If your car has been idle for more than 10 seconds, turn off your engine!
- **Maintain your vehicle**: Regular maintenance and appropriate tire pressure can ensure your vehicle runs as efficiently as possible.

**Resources**

**U-PASS**
Students can ride all local transit options using your WATCard.

**DISCOUNTED TRANSIT PASSES**
Most UWaterloo employees are eligible for a discounted transit pass through UW Parking Services.

**EMERGENCY RIDE HOME**
The University has an Emergency-Ride-Home program for employees who have walked, carpooled, cycled, or taken transit.

**CARPOOL MATCHING**
GoTravelWise helps you find carpool matches for regular or one-time trips, and provides information on different ways to get to campus.

**GRT EASYGO**
Use GRT’s EasyGO service on your smartphone, web browser, or through text to find information on transit routes and schedules.

**VRTUCAR**
Programs like VRTUCAR or Enterprise CarShare provide the benefits of having a car when you need it, without the added cost of maintenance and insurance.

**BIKE SHARING**
Find out how you can rent out bikes for anything from short-term trips to an entire term!

**SECURE BIKE PARKING**
Waterloo hosts secure bike storage locations on campus, and can provide tips to prevent bike theft.
As our population continues to grow, so too does our demand for food. Mass consumption of resource-intensive foods, such as red meats and large-scale agriculture, have become major topics in modern sustainability. Understanding where your food comes from and its impact on our planet is important to understanding food in relation to climate change.

**OUR GOAL**

Increase food purchased locally or covered by a sustainability certification, achieve and maintain a Fair Trade Campus designation, and create awareness and knowledge about healthy foods to staff and students.

**Tips**

Easy things to remember when purchasing food or making your lunch:

- **Buy local**: Purchase from local farmers to support the local economy and avoid foods that have traveled thousands of miles.
- **Cook for the season**: Understanding the availability of produce during fall, winter, spring and summer months can help when cooking or purchasing locally, and save you money!
- **Minimize meat**: Diets consisting of red meat have a higher climate change footprint. Try swapping red meat for fish, poultry, or vegetarian options.
- **Buy fair trade**: Products branded as Fair Trade, such as coffee and tea, support fair and safe labour practices, community development, and environmental protection.
- **Make a list**: Making a list before shopping is a great way to stop buying more than you need – you’ll avoid food waste and save money!
- **Eat out less**: Cook more often and in larger quantities so you can bring leftovers for lunch the next day.

**Resources**

**UW FARM MARKET**

Food Services runs the [UW Farm Market](http://uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/food) during spring and fall terms to bring fresh, local food right on campus.

**CAMPUS MARKET GARDEN**

Get involved with planting and gardening food at the University, shared with the community and in cafeterias!

**VEGETARIAN RECIPES**

Cooking meat-free can be easy and delicious. Check out some free websites like OhMyVeggies and Genius Kitchen for tasty recipes.

**FOOD LABELS**

Visit [Eco-label Canada](http://uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/food) to learn more about the over 100 labels that can be found on your food products, like Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) or SeaChoice seafood.

**FOODLAND ONTARIO**

Visit [Foodland Ontario](http://uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/food) for more information about purchasing local, what’s in season, and seasonal recipes.

**FOOD LINK**

Check out [Foodlink](http://uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/food) to take advantage of the rich selection of farmer’s markets in Waterloo Region and help support local businesses.

**GARDENING RESOURCES**

The [Working Centre](http://uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/food) has great information if you are interested in starting your own local food garden.
By using sustainable landscaping practices, you can help to reduce excessive water and chemical use, support local biodiversity, and create an aesthetically-appealing and relaxing environment to enjoy with family and friends.

**OUR GOAL**

By 2025, all University grounds will be maintained to sustainable landscaping standards, and plans for remediation and protection of natural areas will be developed.

**Tips**

Take better care of the ground on campus and at your own home with these tips:

- **Keep it clean:** When outdoors, throw all trash in a nearby garbage or recycling bin, and join local community cleanups to help tidy litter.
- **Take time outdoors:** Ask your colleagues or fellow students to join you outside for a meeting or to study.
- **Bring the outside in:** Place plants inside your office, common spaces, or dorm rooms to brighten up your space.
- **Use green cleaning products:** Use natural and eco-certified cleaning products to reduce harmful impacts on the environment from everyday items like soaps, detergents, and disinfectants.
- **Plant native, non-invasive species:** Look for species that are native to Southwestern Ontario and won’t spread rapidly.
- **Help pollinators:** Bees and many pollinating species love wildflowers, so add some eco-friendly colour to your garden like orange milkweed, coneflower, smooth aster, and more!
- **Stay on the path:** Avoid walking through natural areas, as this can disturb wildlife in sensitive areas.
- **Reduce pesticides:** Pull weeds out the old-fashioned way and limit the use of plant growth hormones used in your gardens.

**Resources**

**IN THE ZONE**

Find plant species that will survive and thrive in our local Carolinian Zone.

**BLOOM-IN-BOX**

Check out the selection of native species and pollinator garden kits by Reep Green Solutions.

**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

Reep Green Solutions provides resources to help manage rain where it falls through green infrastructure.

**STORMWATER CREDITS**

Implement stormwater techniques on your property and you may be able to receive the City of Waterloo Stormwater Credit.

**WATERLOO CONSERVATION**

Learn more about water and landscaping conservation techniques.

**COMMUNITY GARDENING**

Join the Waterloo Community Garden Club to join a garden or learn a little more about at-home gardening.
CONCLUSION

Thank you for reading through our Sustainability Guide and taking another step forward on your journey to more sustainable living. We hope you have enjoyed these tips and resources, and we encourage you to follow up with the resources referenced throughout to learn more. You can also visit the Sustainability Office webpage to stay updated on exciting initiatives and events, both on campus and in the community. Finally, we would love to hear from you, so check out our social media accounts to let us know what you’re doing to live more sustainably, and how we can help!

Remember, every small action leads to a big impact when we all work together!

Other Resources

Visit the links below to learn more about each action area in this guide.

- About renewable energy – Natural Resources Canada
- Big World Small Planet – Book
- Cambridge Energy Management Plan – City of Cambridge
- Canada’s Action on Climate Change – Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Climate Change – National Geographic
- Climate Change – United Nations
- Climate Change Action Plan – Province of Ontario
- Circular economy – Ellen MacArthur Foundation
- Global Environment Outlook – UN Environment
- Kitchener Energy Management Plan – City of Kitchener
- Municipal Solid Waste and Greenhouse Gases – Environment and Climate Change Canada
- Ontario’s Electricity System – Province of Ontario, Ministry of Energy
- Ontario’s Local Food Strategy, Ontario’s First Food Security Strategy – Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
- Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change – Government of Canada
- Recycling Council of Ontario
- Sustainable Development Goals – United Nations Development Programme
- Sustainable Transportation – David Suzuki Foundation
- Transportation and the Environment – Transport Canada
- Waterloo Energy Management Plan – Region of Waterloo
- What is Climate Change – David Suzuki Foundation
- What is Climate Change – NASA