

Just DePaul

Sustainability Checklist: Tips and Tricks



DePaul has always been committed to making changes to the campus that are sustainable. In the 2020-2021 school year, in an effort to be a more sustainable campus, Facility Operations did a number of repairs and replacements with a focus on conserving energy. Renovation projects now include a number of energy-saving components, residential washers and dryers that were switched to Energy Star rated equipment, and since 2015 DePaul has a solar charging station in the Quad at LPC and the outdoor deck of DPC at Loop. These are improvements that have made a huge impact on campus. But there is still much work to be done when it comes to everyday conservation.

Here are little ways in different areas of your life to reduce the waste produced in your household, campus, shopping, traveling, and overall lowering your carbon footprint.

Around the House or Dorm:

- Turn off power strips at night when not in use
- Unplug appliances that are not in use
- Turn off lights when you're not in a room
- Consider getting a surge protector to conserve energy
- Get a leaky faucet fixed as soon as possible
- Buy your own reusable water bottle, don't use plastic

- Get yourself a coffee pot and avoid the single-use Keurig pods. If the dorm has a coffee pot, invest in some delicious coffee from [Ethical Bean](#), [Café Mam](#), or [Chicago Fair Trade](#) to fill the pot with, not the K-Cups
- Wash your laundry on cold and your dryer on medium heat, or hang-dry your clothes
- Consider buying 100% cotton cloths and towels, not microfiber or polyester
- Ask your building/dorm if they compost. If not, there is an easy way to sign up for a local compost company like [WasteNot Compost](#)
- Try decreasing your shower by five minutes
- Avoid the Swiffers® and single-use wipes like Clorox
- Don't wrap your recyclables in plastic bags. Use paper bags or keep it loose

Around Campus:

- Look for recycling and compost bins around campus and familiarize yourself with what you can and cannot recycle [here](#)
- Bring your own tote bag/backpack when shopping at the campus store to reduce plastic bag waste
- Bring your lunch in a reusable lunch bag/box
- When ending a class if you have room in your notebook, use it for your next class. If not, recycle all notebooks, give away binders/folders to Goodwill or a fellow student, and recycle all paper items
- When moving out, donate unneeded items like furniture, desk items, and clothes, do not throw them away!
- If a toilet has a water-reduced flush, make sure to read the instructions in order to save water
- If you have a car, consider commuting some days and driving others, to cut down on your weekly emissions. Consider ride sharing and [Divvy bikes](#), which are accessible in many locations on DePaul's campus, or walking to get your steps in!
- You can also carpool or use [DePaul University's Vinnie Van](#)
- Refuse single-use items like plastic utensils
- Check out various [Eco Clubs](#) on campus such as
 - DePaul Urban Gardners
 - DePaul Trees
 - Student Government Association Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee
 - DePaul Fair Trade Committee
 - DePaul Net Impact
 - DePaul Climate Reality Campus Corps
 - The Green Team

When Traveling:

- When packing, consider items like a reusable straw, small reusable containers for snacks and pills, and reef-safe sunscreen without harmful chemicals such as [Raw Elements](#)
- Think about taking a Greyhound or bus if your location is close enough: you can get it cheaper and avoid air travel hassle
- If you plan on flying, try out sites like [bookdifferent.com](#) that calculate your carbon footprint per night based on your selection and include eco-friendly ratings
- When planning your trip, look up the Sustainable City Guide of the place you are traveling to like [thegoodtrade.com](#)
- When thinking about lodging; homestays, hostels, local guides, and programs that give back to communities are often the most eco-friendly. Hostels tend to be a fun way to meet people while keeping a lower carbon footprint than staying in a hotel
- At restaurants, ask for foil or a recyclable option for your to-go food
- Always use the [Leave No Trace](#) rule whether you're in the city, forest, or countryside
- When touring a city, consider a biking or walking tour. If not, try renting an electric car or taking public transportation, it's a fun way to see more of the city!
- Shop local while you're traveling. Avoid chain stores, and markets outside tourist destinations, which are likely to sell cheaply made, imported goods

Grocery Shopping:

- Show off your cute totes when you grocery shop and you'll be the envy of every other plastic bag user
- If you forgot your reusable grocery bag, ask if they have paper bags over plastic
- Utilize farmer's markets since they do not tend to use as many plastics and you get fresh non-processed foods, plus free samples!
- Before you go shopping, make a weekly meal plan so food doesn't go to waste
- Visit the deli counter for cheese and deli meats, ask for paper wrapping
- Look for non-perishables packaged in paper, metal, or glass
- Avoid plastic and styrofoam packaging in general when shopping
- Check out [this list](#) of other sustainable grocery stores
- [Imperfect Foods](#) is a great service for getting fresh fruits and vegetables that would otherwise be thrown out due to appearance

Clothes Shopping:

- Avoid fast fashion clothing stores like Forever 21, H&M, Zara, Urban Outfitters, and most stores you see in malls.
- Instead, consider these alternatives in sustainable fashion:
 - [Greenheart Shop](#): 5247 N. Clark St. Chicago, IL 60640
 - [Mata Traders](#): 5112 N Ravenswood Ave Chicago, IL 60640
 - [Planet Access](#): 4727 N. Lincoln Ave. Chicago, IL 60625
 - [Allbirds](#): 843 W Armitage Ave Chicago, IL 60614
 - [The Guild](#): 3717 N Southport Avenue
 - [Production Mode](#): 2233 S Throop Street
 - [SHUDIO](#): 1152 W 18th Street
- Go thrifting at Goodwill, Salvation Army, Poshmark, or other thrift shops. There you can find amazing deals, and great clothes that will last you years, and it saves on the waste produced by fast fashion
- Avoid Amazon shopping when you can! They wrap everything in single-use plastic
 - If you're going to shop on Amazon, select the Amazon Day shipping option so they use less packaging materials.
 - And check out [Amazon Second Chance](#) for some sustainable options
- For a special event, consider borrowing clothes from a friend/family member or renting clothing instead of buying. Check out [Rent the Runway](#) for more info

Other Sustainable Shopping Items:

- Try plastic-free, compostable lip balms from [Poppy and Pout](#)
- For plastic-free toilet paper packaging [Who Gives a Crap?](#)
- For sustainable cleaning products, shop at [Blueland](#)
- Want carbonated water? Check out [Sodastream®](#)
- Need deodorant? Here's a compostable option from [Ethique](#)
- Trade your plastic zip bags for reusable silicone bags like [Stashers](#)
- Use bamboo toothbrushes that are eco-friendly, which can be found at places like [Walgreens](#)

Sustainable companies that are making it easier to live sustainably:

- Check out [Eco and the Flamingo](#), Chicago's first Zero Waste General Store
- The [Refilleri](#) and [The Unwaste Shop](#) do refills and household supplies
- [The Earthling Company](#) has sustainable hair care products and soap
- [Sheets Laundry Club](#) has plastic-free laundry detergent