

10 ways to reduce your carbon footprint this autumn

Moving the articles from the printed Your Denplan magazine online is just one of the ways that we're working to make our business more environmentally sustainable.

If you'd like to reduce your personal impact on the environment, here are ten simple ways you make a difference. You don't have to do all of these. Just making the few changes that you can, can make a significant improvement to your personal environmental impact.

"We don't need a handful of people doing zero waste perfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly."

– Anne Marie Bonneau, Zero Waste Chef





1. Put a plug in post

While paper is a very sustainable product, and finding paper alternatives to single use plastic is great, transporting and delivering post emits a large amount of carbon into the atmosphere. Unfortunately, a lot of vans, lorries, and other transport for our post, still rely on fossil fuels to get around.

By asking your service providers to send you emails instead of letters, you can reduce the carbon emissions these services produce. You can ask this from any service you're receiving, from your utility providers, to your bank, to your preferred supermarket.

If you haven't already, you can choose to receive correspondence regarding your Denplan payment plan by email as well. Just sign-up to your MyDenplan account at www.denplan.co.uk/MyDenplan and switch your correspondence preference to email. We'll then send any communications to you via email, wherever possible.

2. Say watt!

As autumn brings darker days we all rely more on the lights in our homes. This increase in our electricity use inevitably increases our contribution to carbon emissions. But there are simple ways you can limit the energy usage of your lights.

The first is to make as much use as you can of natural light, even as it gets less and less through the months. Make sure to see if you can make your home bright enough just by opening all your curtains and blinds before you resort to turning on the light. Natural light is also linked to a lot of health benefits, like improving your sleep, your mood and even your productivity.

Choosing the right lightbulbs is also a great way to reduce your energy usage. You might already be using energy saving CFL bulbs, the spiralling kind. But now, even more energy efficient LED light bulbs are available. Of the lightbulbs available, LED bulbs use the least amount of energy and last longest, lasting up to 5 times longer than CFL bulbs.

Lastly, the easiest way to reduce emissions from your lighting is to always turn off a light when you're not using it. Even if you'll only be gone from the room for a few minutes, lighting an empty room wastes energy. Flicking the lights off is a free and simple way to reduce your carbon footprint and save you money.



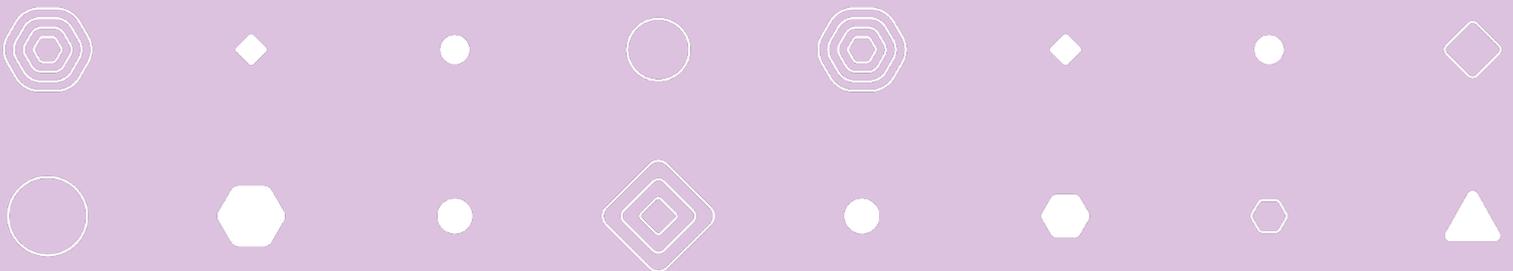


3. Put a lid on it

The kitchen is possibly the room in your house that uses the most energy. Cooking, freezing and refrigerating food requires a lot of energy.

Simple habits, like only boiling the correct amount of water you need, makes your kitchen more energy efficient. Even just putting a lid on your pots and pans as you cook makes a big difference. Without a lid the contents of the pan will lose heat and cooking is more wasteful and takes longer.

Did you know that using a microwave to cook or heat food takes almost 80% less energy than using a conventional oven? There is a misconception that microwaving food makes it less nutritious. However, the only nutritional changes that occur while microwaving are the result of heating, and happen in any form of cooking. In fact, more nutrients are lost by boiling vegetables than microwaving them.



4. Get Hygge with it!

The Danish word “Hygge”, pronounced “hue-guh”, describes a concept of cosiness, contentment and enjoying the simple pleasures of life. So how do you become more hygge? Pop your mobile, computer and other devices away and start getting cosy. Think board games, blankets, mugs of hot cocoa and let the contentment of being snug in your home wash over you.

While you're hygge, and enjoying your favourite cardigans and slippers, turn the temperature on your heating down. There are lots of ways to stay warm at home without using more energy. Turning your heating down by just 1°C could save you £75 a year, and you wouldn't even notice the difference.





5. Learn the ancient arts of recycling

You might be in the same situation as millions of people around the UK – you're recycling already but, thanks to a lack of information available, some of your rubbish is going in the wrong bin.

Did you know that you can't recycle wine glasses? Or pet food pouches? Or even post-it notes? And there are lots of things going to landfill that could have been recycled, like empty deodorant and hair spray cans (with the plastic cap still on), bleach bottles and clean kitchen foil.

What can and can't be recycled will change depending on your local authority. Visit your council's website to learn just what can and can't go in each of your bins.

Even if something can't be recycled, there are ways to stop it from going to landfill. For example, greasy pizza boxes can't go into your recycling, but they can be torn up and added to a compost heap.

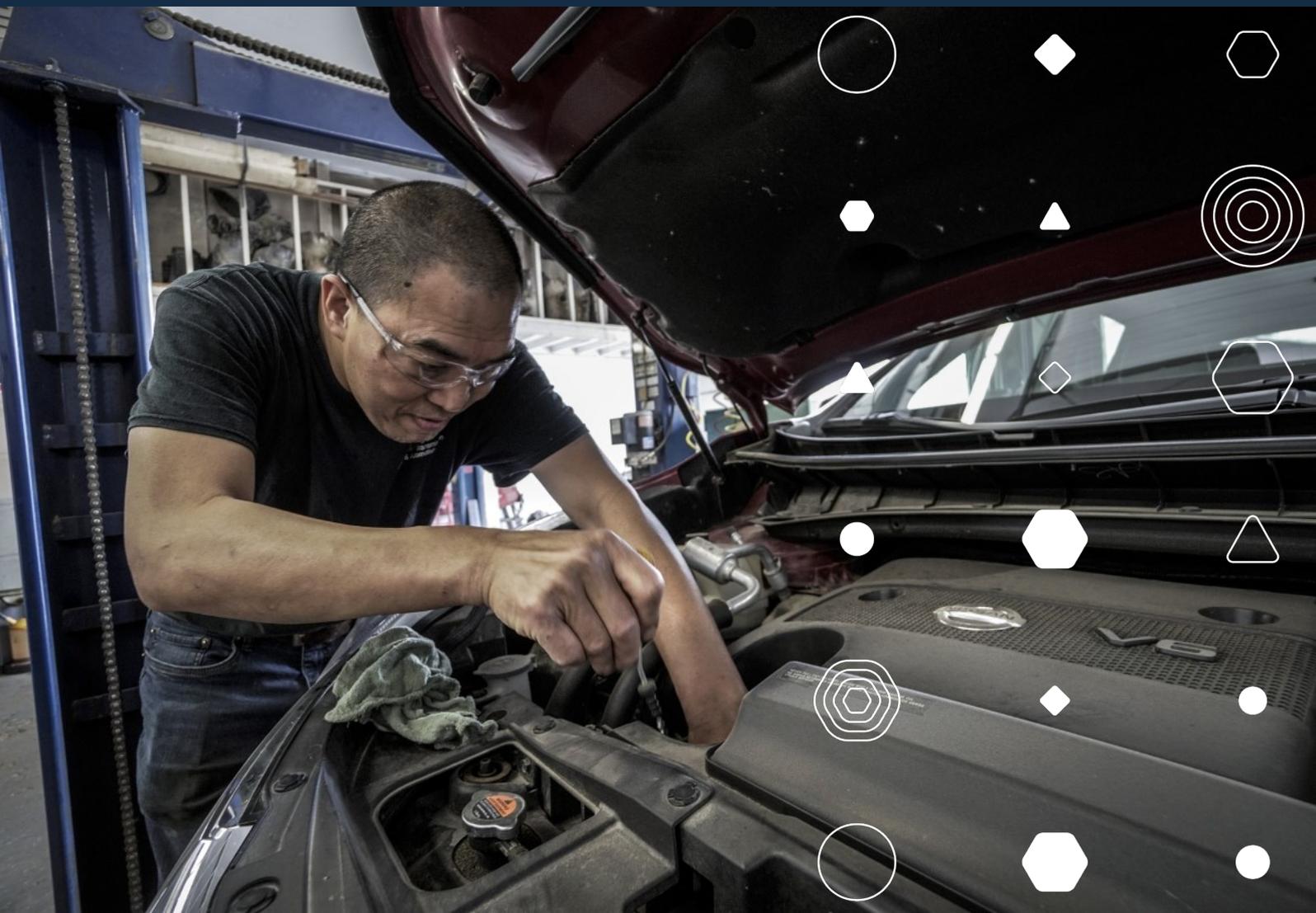
6. Make your car as efficient as possible

Cars are one of the largest contributors of excess carbon in the atmosphere. However, while so many of us rely on our cars to work and live we can't just get off the roads. What you can do is maximise your car's efficiency to reduce fuel consumption and reduce emissions.

Only keep what you need in your car. Increasing the weight of your car increases the fuel needed to get around, and bumps up your emissions. If you don't need something for your journey, take it out of the car, and only put it back when you need it. Of course, you can keep equipment for emergencies (like a spare tyre and jack).

Keep your tyres inflated. If your tyres are running a little low on air, your car will perform less efficiently and use more fuel. Make sure to maintain your tyre pressure at the levels listed in your owner's manual. Regular services will also help keep your engine running efficiently and help your fuel consumption stay as low as possible.

Finally, planning your journeys is the best way to reduce the emission you produce by driving. Try to run multiple errands at once, to cut down on trips back and forth and reduce the overall time spent on the road.





7. Prevent plastic pollution

Plastic waste causes multiple problems for the environment. You've probably already seen that plastic waste in our oceans is harming sea life, which accidentally eats the rubbish. Plastics also leach harmful chemicals and micro-plastics into their surroundings as they age. And plastics are refined from crude oil. Reliance on plastic products further increases the need to damage environments while looking for more crude oil sources.

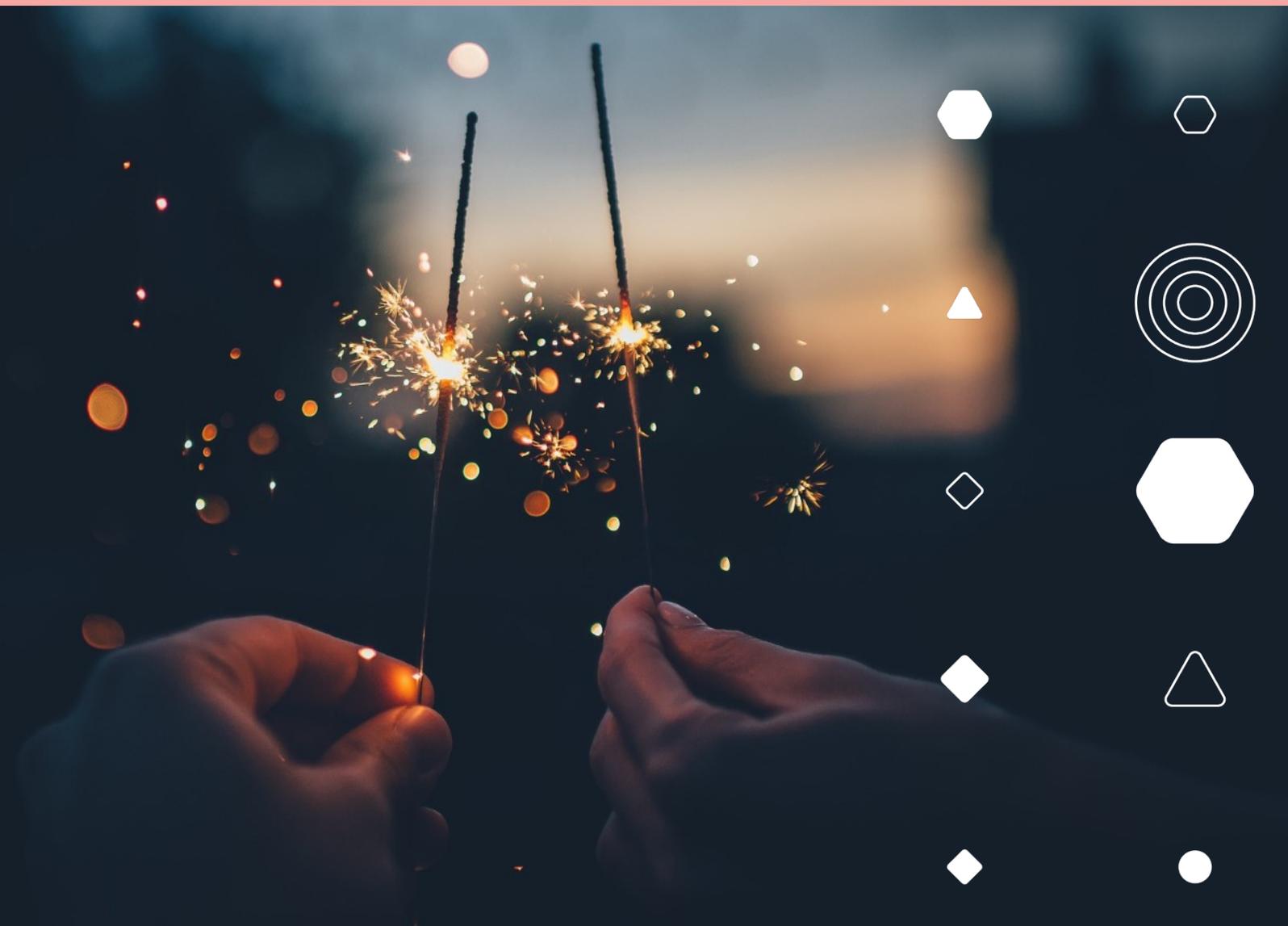
The best way to reduce the harm of plastic waste is to reduce the amount of plastic used. If you're offered single-use plastic products, like plastic cutlery with your food, or a lid for your coffee cup, gently refuse. Try buying your soft drinks in cans. Aluminium cans are easier to recycle and require less energy to manufacture than plastic bottles.

For the plastic items you already have, try to keep them out of landfill by using them for as long as possible. You can even use plastic, to beat plastic. Store food that needs to be covered in Tupperware boxes that you will use again, instead of wrapping it in cling film that needs to be thrown away.

8. Give the Guy a break

5th November can be a wonderful time outside with family and friends, but thousands of bonfires across Britain release a huge amount of carbon into the atmosphere. This year, just stick to fireworks and pass on the bonfire. That way, you can still enjoy your rockets and sparklers and cut down on your emissions.

At any time, bonfires are a very wasteful and harmful way to dispose of unwanted wood and garden waste. Your waste wood can be used to help your local environment, by making a wood pile habitat for wildlife, or by taking it to your local recycling centre.





9. Make your gifts sparkle, not the wrapping

On Christmas day, tons of wrapping paper that could have been recycled goes to landfill because it contains shiny foil or glitter. With millions of presents being unwrapped around the world, and most of those presents have more packaging under the paper, Christmas becomes possibly the most wasteful day of the year.

To make it less wasteful, wrap your presents in simple brown paper. The look is classically charming and it's the gift inside that's the important part. If you'd like to be even more sustainable you can re-use your newspapers to wrap your presents this year.

During all of your celebrations this autumn, say no to balloons. They can't be recycled and are frequently blown away so never even make it to landfill. Instead of saying it with a balloon, try a bouquet of flowers instead.

10. Eat a little differently

The food we eat has a big impact on our environment. Making space for livestock, and monoculture crops is one of the largest causes of deforestation. By changing our eating habits we can reduce the demand for these foods, and help control the rate of deforestation.

If you eat meat, try making it more of a special occasion. You can still gain all of the benefits of having meat in your diet, without having it in every meal or even every day. Most meats have a larger carbon footprint than vegetables, so switching to more veggie based meals will help reduce your carbon consumption. Meat-free Mondays are a good way to ease into a new eating habits.

Some meats have bigger carbon footprints than others. Much more carbon is released during the production of beef than it takes to get chicken to your plate. Cutting beef out of your diet, or just saving it for special occasions can improve your personal impact.

Choosing where to buy your food can also help, like buying from a local grocer, or directly from the farmer. This way the food usually comes with less plastic packaging, you can even bring your own containers, and it doesn't have to travel as far, cutting down on transport emissions.

