

Being waterwise at home

Whether we have an abundance of water or are in short supply during a drought, we all need to think about how much water we use and how we use it. You can help conserve our water supply and save some money by making simple changes around your home.

How much water do you use?

Here are some simple ways to find out how much water your household uses.

- ◆ Check your water bill from the local council or water service provider. It will show you how much water your household uses each day, as well as the daily average use for households in your local area.
- ◆ Check your water meter. Make a note of your meter reading, then check it again one week later. Divide the amount by seven to estimate the daily use for your household. More information about how to read your meter is available on the DEWS website.
- ◆ Conduct a home water use audit. Information about this is available on the DEWS website.



- ◆ Check for leaks at your property. More information about how to detect leaks is available on the DEWS website.

Once you know how much water you use, contact your local council to find out whether there is a voluntary water target in your local area. If one doesn't exist, set your own! Your aim is to use less water, so make sure you set an achievable target.

Remember, by saving water you will also save:

- ◆ energy—it takes energy to treat, transfer and heat water. The less water you use, the less energy you use
- ◆ money—if you are billed for the amount of water you use, you can save money by reducing the amount you use
- ◆ the environment—the less wastewater you generate, the less contaminants and detergents you release into our rivers and oceans.

Bathroom

We use more water in our bathrooms than in any other internal part of the house. It's a great place to start when looking for ways to save water. Here are some water-saving ideas.

Toilet

Up to 16 per cent of household water is flushed down the toilet. The following tips can reduce the amount of water used and, in turn, reduce your water bills.

- ◆ Don't flush needlessly. Use the half-flush option on dual flush toilets and never flush items other than toilet paper down the toilet.
- ◆ Replace your older-style toilet with a 4-star WELS Scheme dual-flush toilet. This can save up to eight litres of water with every flush.
- ◆ Use tank water to flush. Talk to your plumber about having your rainwater tank internally plumbed to your toilet.
- ◆ Tip: A leaking toilet can waste more than 60 000 litres of water a year. Check for leaks by putting a little food colouring in the cistern. If the colouring begins to appear in the bowl without flushing, have the cistern rubber repaired immediately. Flush the toilet clean as soon as you have completed this test.



Showers

A standard shower can use up to 20 litres of water per minute and contribute up to 24 per cent of household water use. To use less water in the shower, try:

- ◆ installing a water-efficient showerhead. A 3-star WELS Scheme showerhead will use no more than nine litres of water per minute
- ◆ taking shorter showers. Shorter showers save water and also help reduce the amount of electricity/gas needed for heating the water
- ◆ insulating your hot water pipes. This means you won't need to wait as long for hot water to flow through them – saving you both water and electricity/gas
- ◆ ensuring your hot water thermostat isn't set too high. Adding cold water to reduce the temperature wastes both water and electricity/gas
- ◆ using a bucket to catch water while the water in the shower heats up. You can then reuse this water in your garden.

Baths and basins

To reduce your water usage in baths and basins:

- ◆ insert a plug when washing your hands in a basin

- ◆ turn off the tap while cleaning your teeth or shaving
- ◆ use as little water as possible in the bath by placing the plug in before you turn on the tap, then filling the bath to less than one third full
- ◆ bath small children together
- ◆ have a licensed plumber install flow restrictors and aerators into taps around the house
- ◆ replace your older-style taps with star rated WELS Scheme products.

Laundry

The best way to save water and electricity in the laundry is to use a minimum 4-star WELS Scheme rated washing machine as it uses up to 50 per cent less water.

There are a number of other ways you can save water in the laundry too.

- ◆ Try not to use your washing machine every day. Instead, sort clothes and wash bigger loads less frequently.
- ◆ Pre-treat stains to limit the amount of rewashing.
- ◆ When adjusting the warm water flow, always turn the hot water down rather than the cold water up.
- ◆ Use small amounts of water if washing clothes by hand and reuse the water in your garden.

- ◆ Make sure that everyone picks up and sorts the clothes they wear each day so that clean clothes don't get washed by mistake.
- ◆ Divert greywater from your washing machine for immediate use on your garden (except on vegetables).

Tip: Consider using biodegradable, low-phosphorous, low-sodium and low-nitrogen detergents as they are better for your garden.



Kitchen

Water use in the kitchen contributes to 13 per cent of total household water consumption on average. There are many ways to save water in the kitchen.

- ◆ Use the dishwasher. Running a full load in a water-efficient dishwasher uses less water than washing dishes by hand. A 5-star WELS Scheme water-efficient dishwasher uses as little as seven litres of water.
- ◆ Scrape and soak your dishes to remove food—avoid rinsing them under running water.
- ◆ If you have two sinks, half fill the second sink with rinsing water. If you only have one sink, rinse the washed dishes in a pan of water.
- ◆ Rinse vegetables in a bowl and then use the water in your garden.
- ◆ Don't use running water to defrost food. Place your frozen food in the fridge to thaw out overnight.
- ◆ Store drinking water in the fridge—running the tap until the water is cool wastes up to 15 litres a minute.
- ◆ Encourage children to empty water bottles onto the garden or pot plants instead of tipping water down the sink.

Garden

Careful planning and good gardening habits can make a big difference to your watering needs.

- ◆ Avoid watering in the middle of the day when evaporation is high.
- ◆ Identify your soil type—this will determine the amount of water you need to use.
- ◆ Plan your garden and include water-efficient plants. You can select the right plants by using the online tool, Waterwise Plant Selector, which is available at <http://aih.org.au/plant-selector>.
- ◆ Don't overwater, as waterlogged soil encourages the growth of bacteria and fungi which cause disease in plants.
- ◆ Mulch generously—it reduces water loss by up to 70 per cent, improves your soil and discourages weeds.
- ◆ Compost food scraps—compost enriches the soil by helping it absorb and hold more water.



Pool

If you are a pool or spa owner, you can reduce water consumption by following these water saving tips:

- ◆ Use a pool cover. A properly fitted pool cover can stop up to 97 per cent of evaporation, which in turn reduces the amount of chemicals required to treat the water.
- ◆ Check your pool for leaks—a tiny leak could result in a large amount of water loss.
- ◆ Maintain the water level of your pool—it will reduce your household water consumption.
- ◆ Build your pool in an area that is shaded during the hottest part of the day. This will reduce evaporation and help you avoid the sun's harsh rays while you swim.

- ◆ Maintain the correct chemical balance in your pool and clean your pool regularly.
- ◆ Top up your pool with rainwater run-off.
- ◆ When purchasing a new pool filter look for a water-efficient model. An energy-efficient pump can also significantly reduce electricity/gas costs.

More information about how to be water efficient with your pool and spa is available on the DEWS website.

Outdoors

A few simple one-off modifications to outdoor fittings and appliances can save water.

- ◆ Install a rainwater tank to decrease use of town water and reduce water bills.
- ◆ Use a broom to sweep outdoor areas rather than hosing them down.
- ◆ Use a trigger hose or bucket when washing your car and try to wash it on the lawn.



Check for leaks

A large amount of water in the home can be lost due to leaking pipes and dripping taps. One slowly dripping tap can waste 9 000 litres of water a year, while a visibly leaking toilet can waste more than 60 000 litres.

Make sure that you turn all your taps off properly, check for leaks and repair leaking taps, and keep all water fittings and equipment in good condition.

To find out if you have a leak in your pipes, turn off all taps and make sure nobody will be using any water. Check your water meter and make a note of the reading. Recheck the meter after at least one hour. If the reading has changed, you may have a leak. If you detect a leak make sure you repair it quickly! More information about how to detect leaks is available on the DEWS website.

Saving water for the future

Water is a precious resource that needs to be conserved now and in the future. Continued population growth creates additional challenges for future supply.

Treating water for use in homes and businesses requires costly and energy-intensive infrastructure, which impacts on water prices, the economy and the environment. We cannot rely on rainfall to provide us with a never-ending supply of water, so it is important to use water efficiently.

Water sustainability is of vital importance to all Queenslanders. By using water wisely, we can all help ensure we have enough water now and in the future. Make a difference today!

More information

Other water efficiency information is available on the Department of Energy and Water Supply website at www.dews.qld.gov.au, on the Smart Approved WaterMark website at www.smartwatermark.info/home and the WELS (Water Efficiency and Labelling Standards) scheme at www.waterrating.gov.au.

Contact your local council or water service provider for more information and to check whether any water restrictions apply in your area.

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