

## Household Elf

Being stuck in the house due to the spread of COVID-19 isn't super fun. But, it's a great time to have a clean home, and even better if it's a clean, green home! In this badge, pick up some new household habits to help your family save energy, save water, and save the planet.

Steps:

1. Save energy
2. Save water
3. Go natural
4. Reuse or recycle
5. Clear the air

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know how to make my home clean and green.

### Step 1: Save Energy

When you sleep, you're saving your energy so you can play more when you wake up. Saving energy in your house is important, too. It helps make sure Earth doesn't run out of the energy that makes electricity. It costs less for your family, too.

#### Go on an energy scavenger hunt

With your family, look for appliances and electronics that are plugged in when they're not in use. Some of these things use energy, called "standby power", even if they're not turned on! Together, make a plan to conserve energy for one week.

For more fun use this [link](#) to learn about how power strips can save you energy!

### Step 2: Save Water

One of the planet's most important resources is water. Everyone needs to protect it, or one day we could run out! Try this idea to save water at your own home.

#### Turn off the faucet when brushing your teeth.

An average running faucet uses about two to three gallons per minute. If you left the faucet on for five minutes while brushing your teeth, that means you wasted nearly 15 gallons of water! Make a sign to put next to the sink to remind your family to do the same.

Send a picture of your sign to the Girl Scouts of Central Indiana! Email Jory Sejdiu at [jsejdiu@girlscoutsindiana.org](mailto:jsejdiu@girlscoutsindiana.org)

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### Step 3: Go Natural

Viruses like COVID-19 spread very easily. One way they spread is by staying on surfaces long after you touch them. That's why it's so important to clean around your house. But often times, cleaning products have a lot of chemicals in them that are not good for our planet. Using natural products, or things that are made with ingredients found in nature, is better for our earth. Instead of a chemical or a plastic being created, you can reuse something you already have. Try one of these natural solutions to a household problem.

#### **Make a natural cleaner**

Look below to find out how to make one for tiles or glass. Then use it to clean all they glass and tile surfaces in your house. Be even greener by using a cloth or an old T-shirt instead of a paper towel!

Glass Cleaner:

1. Put 1 cup of water into a plastic spray bottle.
2. Add 1 cup rubbing (isopropyl) alcohol and 1 tablespoon of white vinegar.
3. Use the mixture to make windows and mirrors sparkle!

Title Cleaner:

1. Pour 1 cup of white vinegar and 1 cup of water into a plastic spray bottle
2. Shake them up.
3. Use the mixture to safely clean kitchen and bathroom counters and tiles.

If you don't have supplies to make your own cleaner, then make your own reusable bag.

Steps:

1. Find a large T-shirt that you or a family member don't wear anymore.
2. Cut the neck and sleeves off the shirt.
3. Ask a family member to help you sew across the bottom. You can also do this with a tank top by turning the tank top on its side and lining up the arm holes and then sewing the bottom.

Tip: You'll want to flip the shirt inside out before sewing to keep the seam on the inside of the bag.

Use this [link](#) to see a tutorial on how to make your own reusable bag!

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### Step 4: Reuse or Recycle

Recycling is a great way to help the environment- and reusing things is great, too. When you send bottles, paper, and plastic away to the recycling plant, it takes energy to turn them into new products, but when you reuse something, you're keeping it out of the trash system altogether!

#### Recycle plastic bags into bracelets

Steps:

1. Collect as many plastic bags as you would like.
2. Start by cutting your bag into strips.
3. Tie together as many strips as you would like as one end and then braid down the strip and tie it together the end creating a bracelet.

Tip: Try to find different color plastic bags to change the look of your bracelet.

Use this [link](#) to see a tutorial on how to make a plastic bag into a bracelet!

### Step 5: Clear the Air

The air we breathe is important to how healthy we feel. The air inside your home can contain dust or chemicals that can cause you to sneeze or make it hard to breathe. Clean up the air in your home with one of these activities.

#### Make a natural air freshener

Work with an adult to make your own fresh scent for the house.

Steps:

1. Team up to boil 2 quarts of distilled water with 2 tablespoons of white vinegar.
2. Add a few drops of scented oil or fruit and simmer for a few more minutes.
3. One fresh scent to try is two sliced lemons with 1 tablespoon of vanilla extract.

If you don't have supplies to make a natural air freshener, clean or replace an air filter. Find out how filters help the air, then with an adult check the filters at your home. (If you have a central heating and air conditioning unit, the filters might be in vents in the wall.) if they need cleaning or replacing, team up to follow the instructions to help do it.

**Step 6:** Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Helping make my Brownie meeting place clean and green.
- Setting up recycling bins at school.
- Sharing my natural cleaners with friends and neighbors.

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### Words to Know

- **Landfill:** is an area where large amounts of trash are placed. The trash is usually covered with dirt.
- **Compost:** is a material made from broken-down plants and food scraps. Farmers and gardeners mix it with dirt to help new plants grow.
- **COVID-19:** is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person.

### Fun Facts:

- Your freezer uses less energy when it's full. This is because frozen things help keep each other cold. You don't have to stuff it full of frozen food- water stored in jugs and food storage containers will work, too!
- Four to five trillion plastic bags are used worldwide every year. One family of four goes through about 1,500 a year. Yikes!
- White vinegar dissolves dirt, soap scum, and hard-water deposits from smooth surfaces. It's also a natural deodorizer-it will absorb odors instead of covering them with a perfume-y smell. (The vinegar smell disappears when it dries, too.)
- 97% of people that use reusable bags for shopping don't wash their bags regularly. Or ever. Yuck! Remember it is important to wash your reusable bags and keep everything clean.
- Viruses can stay in the air for up to 3 hours and on some surfaces for up to 3 days. It's important to have clean air in your home and make sure you are cleaning all surfaces frequently.

### Extras:

- **The lifetime of Trash:** How long does it take garbage to break down in the environment?
  - Newspaper: 6 weeks
  - Apple core: 2 months
  - Plastic bag: 10-20 years
  - Aluminum can: 80-200 years
  - Glass bottle: 1 million years
  - Most plastic bottles: Never
- **Recycling a Landfill:** One of the largest landfills in the world is Fresh Kills landfill, where New York City trash was dumped for more than 50 years. It can actually be seen from space! Now it's no longer in use, so it is being turned into a park. Fresh Kills Park

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will be three times the size of New York's central Park. It will have trails for horseback riding, outdoor cafes, and ponds for canoeing.

- **Make a Draft Stopper:** Put a draft stopper over cracks under doors or along the edges of windows so heat doesn't leak out of your home. This way, when it's cold outside, you need less energy to stay warm inside.

Steps:

1. Start with a pair of tights or panty hose. Cut the top and feet off the legs so you have two separate tubes.
2. Tie one end closed tightly with ribbon.
3. Pour dried beans or dried corn into the open hole. You will need about five pounds of beans or corn.
4. Tie off the other end. Place along the bottom of a door or along a windowsill to keep warm air in and cold air out.