

How to Reduce Your Dependence on a Car

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If you have decided to go green, reducing your use of fuel by limiting your dependence on a car is a great place to start. This choice will not only help the environment, it'll also provide you with lots of health benefits. You'll probably end up walking and biking to many of your destinations, and you'll surely experience reduced exposure to fuel emissions. There are a number of ways to avoid using your car, but you'll need to be prepared to do some planning and make some adjustments to your lifestyle.

Method 1

Method 1 of 2: Making Lifestyle Changes

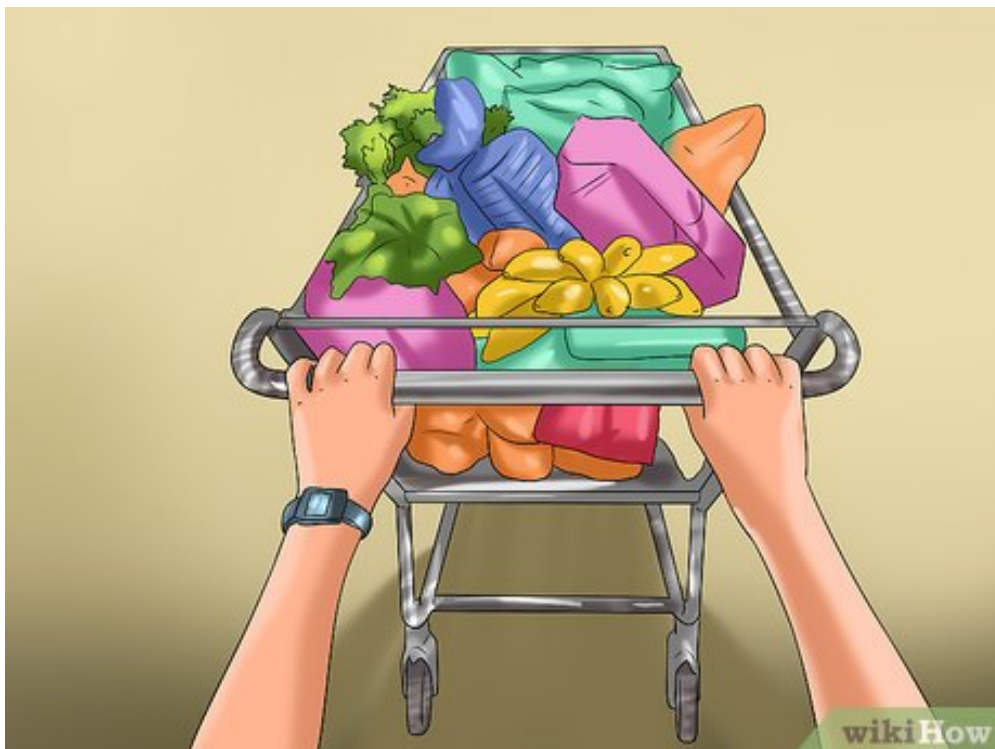


1 Evaluate your driving habits. Think about your typical week, and see if there are places you drive to frequently that you could reach without using your car. Make a list of the places that are within 5 miles (8.0 km) of your home and decide what other modes of transportation you could utilize to reach those spots.



2 Work remotely or telecommute when you can. More and more companies are hiring workers who complete their assignments from home. While this won't be an option for every job or every day, discuss the possibility of limiting your travel to the office with your boss. This conversation could cut down on your commuting.

- Prepare a proposal for your boss that lists benefits of your remote work to your company. For example, you could mention that you'll be able to start work earlier in the day, since you won't need to commute. You could also say that you'll be able to increase your productivity, since you'll be happier and less worried about your environmental impact.

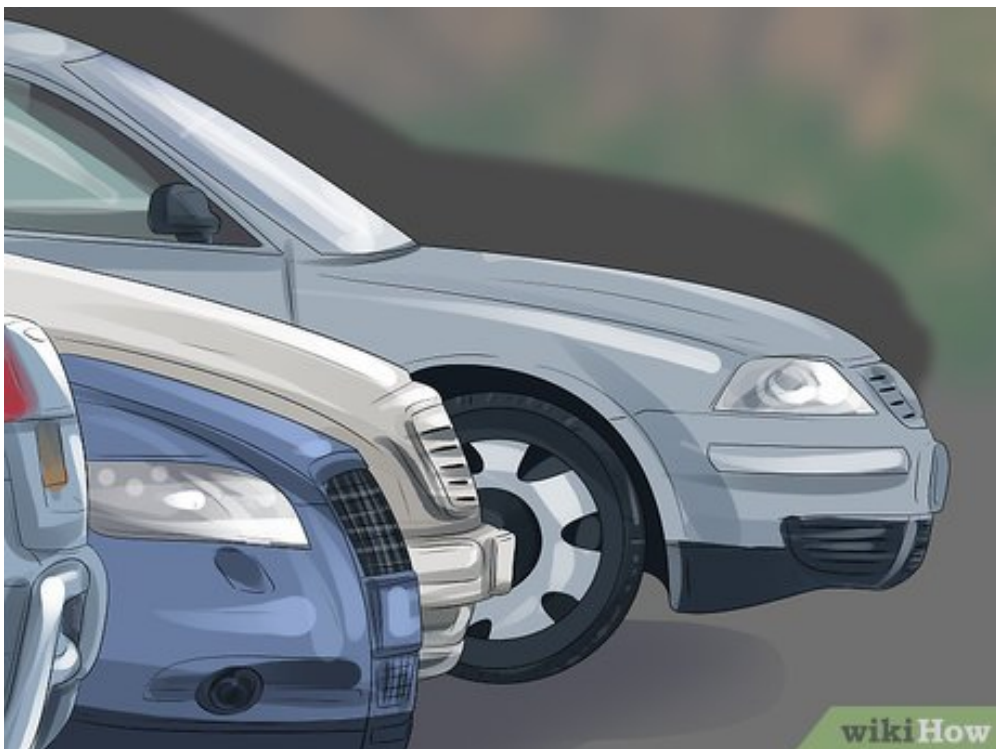


3 Plan meals to limit your trips to the grocery store. If you start the week without an idea of what you're having for dinner each night, you may end up at the grocery store four or five times per week. To avoid this back-and-forth, make a list of your weekly grocery needs and plan your meals ahead of time. Not only will this simplify your life during the week, but it'll also reduce your driving time!^[1]



4 Organize your outings into one trip. Every time you drive to and from your house, you're adding driving time. Try to plan out your daily and weekly schedule so that you're aggregating your driving needs into as few trips as possible.^[2]

- For example, combine grocery shopping with picking your daughter up from ballet class at night. Or, make grocery shopping a family activity that follows your Sunday-morning pancake outing.



5 Explore downsizing if you have more than one car. This may not be an option for all families. Think about each family member's daily and weekly needs, and consider whether one car could cover the trips. Try dropping each other off at various destinations and taking turns using alternative modes of transportation.



6 Consider moving to an area that makes it easier not to drive. There are many cities and towns that have great options for public transportation, as well as town centers with shopping and activities that can be easily reached on foot or by bike. See if you and your family can make a move to one of these areas.^[3]

- It'll be easier to abandon your car in a city than a town. In the United States, New York City, Boston, and San Francisco, for example, all have excellent public transit systems. They also have relatively high costs of living, so you'll have to weigh the pros and cons of moving to these places.

Method 2 of 2: Choosing Other Modes of Transportation



1 Walk to local destinations. You may be surprised by how often you drive to locations that can be easily reached on foot. Even those tricky shopping excursions can be made walkable if your store is close to your house and you have a cart or wagon to hold your groceries.^[4]

- Walking is excellent exercise, so think of your walks as making both you and the earth healthier.
- If you're walking to work, you may need to wear sneakers and pack your work shoes in your bag. You probably won't be the only one rocking the beat-up sneakers and pantsuit look in the morning, so don't worry about looking unprofessional.



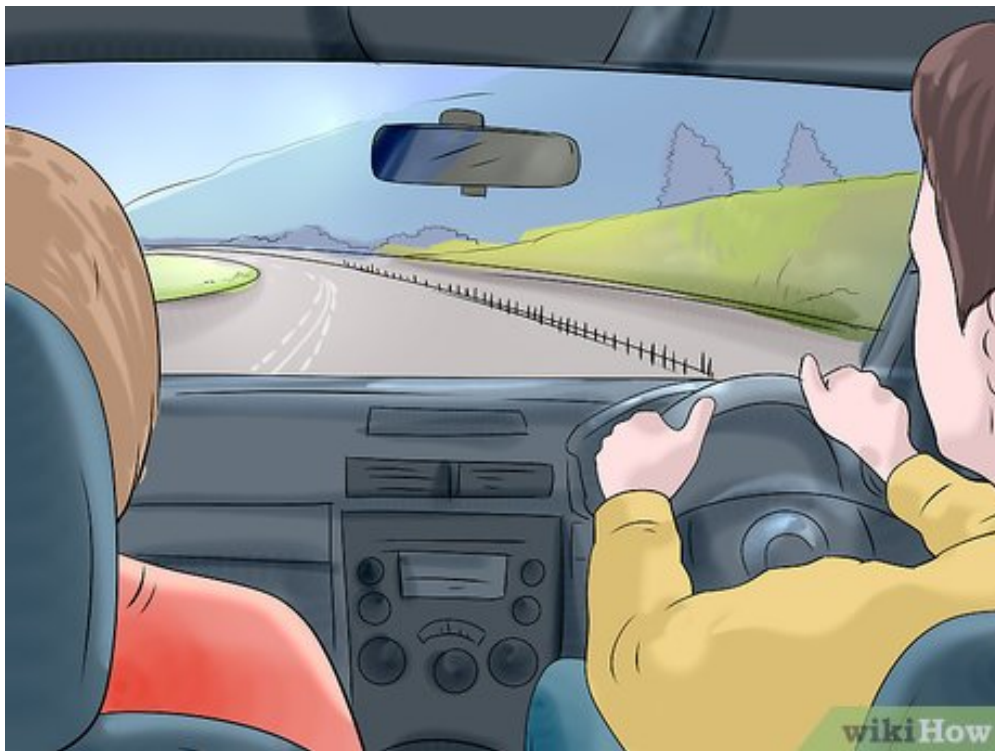
2 Ride a bike for long distances. If you have good weather, safe terrain, and feasible distances, cycle to your destinations. Even more so than walking, biking is an excellent form of cardiovascular exercise. You can even use your bike to combine your commute with your trip to the gym!

- Drive the route first to make sure that it is safe for biking. Additionally, cycling comes with its own rules of the road, so [learn the protocol](#) before heading out.
- If you're cycling to work, make arrangements to shower or freshen up once you arrive. Keep a spare set of dry, clean clothes in your office for emergencies.



3 Rely on mass transportation. Not all cities and towns have public transportation options. If yours does, commit to using it. It may not always be fun taking the often-crowded bus or underground, but mass transit is a great and eco-friendly alternative to driving.^[5]

- You may be able to increase your positive outlook toward mass transportation by considering the benefits. A train ride may give you a quiet hour to catch up on your pleasure reading or finish your presentation before work starts.
- If you live in a rural area that doesn't have public transportation options, approach your local government with the possibility of adding a bus route from popular residential neighborhoods to your town's main shopping areas. If the proposal receives support from a majority of residents, it may become a reality!



4 Set up a carpool with your friends, co-workers, or family members. The process of decreasing your vehicle dependence can be a team effort. Carpooling may be your best option especially if you live in an area without good public transportation options. If you, your family, friends, and/or co-workers frequently visit the same places together, there's no reason not to travel in groups and take turns driving.

- If you're struggling to find fellow commuters to carpool with, try apps designed for that purpose. Carma and Ride both match commuters for carpools.^[6]



5 Invest in a motorcycle or scooter. If you're looking for alternative means to travel longer distances than a few miles, consider purchasing a motorcycle or a scooter. These vehicles use less gas than cars, and they provide a great and fun way to limit your carbon footprint.

- Before you ride your new vehicle in traffic, be sure you've practiced and are prepared to go out on the road safely.
- Some states will require you to have a different license or registration for this type of vehicle. Make sure you're adhering to local and state laws before you ride.



Expert Q&A

Question

How do I make myself walk more?



Kathryn Kellogg
Sustainability
Specialist
Expert Answer

If somewhere is less than a 30-minute walk away, try walking or riding your bike instead of driving.

Helpful ☐ Not Helpful ☐

Question

How do you start carpooling?



Kathryn Kellogg
Sustainability
Specialist
Expert Answer

Try starting a carpool sheet at work. That way, people can ride together when it works for them.

Helpful ☐ Not Helpful ☐



Tips

- Explore grocery delivery services if you're thinking about completely giving up your car. Be sure to keep these deliveries to once a week. You don't want to be the source of multiple trips, even if the car isn't yours!

References

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About This Article



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This article was co-authored by **Kathryn Kellogg**. Kathryn Kellogg is the founder of goingzerowaste.com, a lifestyle website dedicated to breaking eco-friendly living down into a simple step-by-step process with lots of positivity and love. She's the author of 101 Ways to Go Zero Waste and spokesperson for plastic-free living for National Geographic. This article has been viewed 11,785 times.

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