Saving Water

Bathroom
Kitchen
Laundry
The average family of four uses 255 gallons of water a day inside the house. Conservation can easily save one-third of this. Saving water also saves the energy that's needed to pump water to homes and to heat much of it once it gets there.

**BATHROOM**

Three-fourths of all water used in the home is used in the bathroom. For a family of four, average daily uses are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Water Use (gallons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shower/bathtub</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom basin</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So, in saving water, the place to start is with the toilet.

**Toilets.** The average toilet uses 5-7 gallons per flush or 42 per cent of all water used inside the house. You can save 10-18 per cent of total inside water use by using less water at each flushing. Displace part of the water in the toilet tank by putting in one or two plastic one-quart bottles filled with water. Or use plastic dams at the bottom of the tank to hold back some of the water. Sometimes bending the float arm to lower the water level in the tank works successfully. Be sure the water level is high enough to create enough pressure to completely scour out the bowl. Experiment to see how much water you can save and still flush out the bowl completely. Don't use bricks in the toilet tank. The weight may crack the tank and the brick may disintegrate, causing serious plumbing problems.

Toilets sometimes have silent leaks. You can check for these by turning off the water to the tank at the shut-off valve. Do this when you plan to be away from the house for several hours. Then check the water level in the tank when you come back. If there is a leak, have it fixed.

Also flush the toilet less often. Don't use it for disposing of cigarette butts or facial tissue. Put them in wastebaskets. If water is
very short, don’t flush after every use. You can reduce odor by adding chlorine bleach, vinegar, or liquid detergent. Or collect wastewater from the tub-shower or other sources and use it to flush the toilet.

If you’re buying a new toilet, look for one with water-saving features. Some of these use only about half as much water as conventional toilets.

**Showers and baths.** One-third of all water used in the house goes for showers and baths. Conventional showers use 5-10 gallons a minute and some use even more. Using a flow restrictor or a low-flow showerhead that cuts the flow to 3 gallons a minute will save 9-12 per cent of in-house water use and most people can’t tell the difference.

Shorter showers also help. Most people enjoy 5-minute showers, but 2 or 3 minutes may really be enough.

If you prefer to take tub baths, remember that the tub takes 36 gallons if it’s full, but only 10-12 gallons if the water is at a minimum level.

Also remember that you don’t have to bathe as often as you may have been bathing. If water is very scarce, close the tub drain when you shower and use the waste or graywater for flushing the toilet.

**Other savings.** Don’t use running water for tooth brushing, shaving, shampooing, or face or hand washing. With the taps running at full force, shaving takes 20 gallons, tooth brushing 10, and hand washing 2. One gallon is enough for each of these if you fill the basin or just turn on the water when you’re using it. After brushing, rinse your teeth with a glass of water, not with a brush and running water.

If you wash out hose or lingerie in the bathroom, getting rid of the surplus suds can use lots of water. So, do personal laundry in the
kitchen or other sink with a bigger drain or run a bar of soap around the inside of the basin to cut the detergent.

**KITCHEN**

About 12 per cent of the water used in the home is used for dishwashing and cooking.

**Dishwasher.** Fill the dishwasher to capacity before running it. The average dishwasher uses 13-16 gallons per 60-minute cycle. For most dishwashers, pre-rinsing isn’t needed if you scrape the dishes before loading. A rubber spatula will do the best job of scraping. If pre-rinsing is needed, soak the dishes rather than rinsing them under running water. The last rinse cycle in the machine may not be necessary if the earlier rinsing does a good job of removing both food residue and detergent. If so, cut this cycle out manually. If your dishwasher drains into the sink, recycle the water for doing pots and pans, cleaning the stove, etc. If you’re buying a new dishwasher, look for water-saving features. Some new models use only $\frac{1}{2}$ gallons for each load.

If you wash dishes by hand with the tap running, you’ll use 25-30 gallons of water. Washing and rinsing in a sink or dishpan with no running water requires only 5 gallons.

**Disposer.** The average water use each day for a disposer is $1\frac{1}{2}$ gallons per person. Use it once on accumulated scraps rather than after each job of peeling, etc. Better yet, peel onto newspaper and discard or use your vegetable scraps for compost.

**Other savings.** Keep a bottle of chilled water in the refrigerator rather than running water to cool it each time you want a drink. This can waste 2-3 gallons each time. Use a pan of water when peeling and cleaning fruits and vegetables rather than letting the sink tap run. Don’t thaw frozen foods under running water. And don’t leave the water running
while wiping up range and countertops. Use a hand spray to rinse out the sink instead of using the faucet.

LAUNDRY

About 14 per cent of the water used inside the home is used for laundry. Automatic washers use 16-50 gallons per load.

Be sure clothes need it before you wash them and wait until there's a full load of any one type of laundry unless the machine has an adjustable water setting. Generally it takes less water to wash one full load than two partial ones. On programmed machines, check the instruction manual for the machine to see which cycles will use the least water and still do the job properly. If water is very short, try to recycle the wastewater from the machine. Use it for cleaning floors, flushing the toilet, etc.

If you're buying a new machine, look for water-saving features. Some washers use 70 per cent less water than others for the same load.

To keep clothes clean, a few old-fashioned ideas may be worth reviving. Use an apron to protect clothing and have family members change into work or play clothes to keep good clothes from getting dirty so quickly. These clothes can be worn longer without having to look spanking clean.

THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE

Repair leaking faucets. A new washer is often all that's needed. One drip a second can waste 1500 gallons a year.

Install aerators and flow restrictors on sinks and bathroom basins, too. Flow restrictors can cut the flow from 8-12 gallons per minute to 2 gallons and save 2 per cent of all water used in the home.

Insulate hot water pipes to slow heat loss. Not
having to run the tap so long to get hot water will save about 1 per cent on inside water use. Catch the cool water that comes from the faucet before the hot water arrives and use it for cooking, watering house plants, or flushing the toilet.

OTHER IDEAS

Use a broom, not a hose, to remove debris from walks and drives. Car washing can take 45-95 gallons of water. Wash cars with a bucket, not a running hose. Save the hose for the final quick rinse. Do the same for windows. Buy an attachment for the end of the hose so you can turn the water off and on. Catch rainwater from roof gutters and use it for washing hair, watering plants, keeping goldfish, etc.