

7 Ways to Go Green in Your Home Office

By: TABITHA SUKHAI – THIS OLD HOUSE



Opt for a laptop instead of a desktop in your home office. They use considerably less energy and offer the benefit of mobility.

Nowadays, managing a home requires a functional home office space. Home offices present a few challenges, however, when it comes to being eco-friendly. "There are really two key issues for the office: energy and paper," says Jennifer Roberts, the author of *Good Green Homes*, who has been working from home for the past 10 years. Roberts has come up with a few simple ways to save trees, conserve energy, and reduce the carbon footprint of her home office. Here are her pro tips:

- Reduce paper use.** Print only the emails and documents that you really need, and make double-sided printouts when possible. Subscribe to digital newsletters, opt out of paper billing, and register for online banking. "If you need to transmit a signed document, scan and email it instead of printing and faxing it," says Roberts.
- Reuse paper.** Hold onto one-sided printouts and use them as notepaper. If you subscribe to magazines or printed newsletters, consider donating them to your local library or passing them on to a local salon or dentist's office when you're through with them.
- Recycle paper.** Keep a recycling bin right next to your regular trash container. "And, don't just recycle—close the loop by buying recycled-content office products," says Roberts. Recycled paper, envelopes, and packaging material are competitively priced at office supply stores.

•**Buy Energy Star equipment.** "If you're buying new office equipment, look for products with the [Energy Star](#) label. They're designed to save a lot more energy than products without the label," says Roberts. Keep in mind, that using less energy means your saving money, too.

•**Set your machinery to power-saving modes** if you won't be using it for a time. Plug your computer and peripherals into power strips, like the SmartStrip by Bits Limited. Many devices continue to draw power when they're turned off, so power strips allow you to shut off the power on multiple machines easily. According to the Energy Star website, you can save up to \$75 or more per computer by activating system standby or hibernate features and/or turning the power off on your office equipment. Energy Star also suggests hitting the power button on your monitor when its not in use: that small move can save you \$10-\$40, versus leaving a monitor running with a screensaver activated, which can burn up to twice as much energy.

•**Use compact fluorescents.** When considering options to light your office, choose compact fluorescents over incandescent bulbs. "They use 75% less energy and last 8 to 10 years," says Roberts. Also, invest in a good task light on your desk so that you can kill the overhead lights when possible.

•**Buy sustainable or used furnishings.** "My desk is a repurposed pine kitchen table. Reusing furniture that's been around the block a few times is a lot easier on the planet than buying new," says Roberts. Visit FreeCycle.org to view listings posted by people looking to promote reuse by exchanging various goods. If you can't find anything you like on the used market, go with a sustainable manufacturer like [Knu Sustainable Contemporary Green Furniture](#). You can find more information on Knu and other sustainable furniture manufacturers at the [Sustainable Furniture Council's website](#).

Where to Find It

[Jennifer Roberts](#)

Green living & green building advocate; author of *Good Green Homes*, *Good Green Kitchens* and *Redux: Designs That Reuse, Recycle and Reveal*

[Energy Star](#) / US Environmental Protection Agency- US Department of Energy

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