



## Brownie Household Elf

It's great 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. That helps make sure Earth doesn't run out of the energy that makes electricity. It costs less for your family, too.

#### CHOICES — DO ONE:

Be a light-saver. For one week, make sure lights are turned off in rooms no one is using. Are there other energy-users you can switch off, too?

#### OR

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:** Ask a staff member at a home-improvement store how power strips can help you save standby power.

#### OR

Find out about three ways to use less energy. Then make a plan with your family to be more efficient energy users. (Being efficient means you're careful to use only what you really need.) You might replace five regular lightbulbs with energy-saving fluorescent bulbs, clean the lint filter after every dryer load so drying takes less energy, or wash with cold water instead of using energy to heat water.



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### 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 one of these ways to save water at your own home.

#### CHOICES — DO ONE:

Use less water by taking shorter baths or showers for one week. Did you know that for every minute you shower, you use about five gallons of water? That means if you take a 10-minute shower, you've used 50 gallons of water. And a bathtub holds 60 gallons of water! Try to trim your shower time to save water. If you take a bath, fill the tub only half full.

OR

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 you brushed 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.

OR

Find three ways to save water. Then team up with your family to make a water-saving plan. Try following the plan for two weeks. Need some ideas to start? Try running the dishwasher only when it's full, or when washing dishes, don't let the water run. What other ideas do you have?

### Step 3: Go natural.

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.

#### CHOICES — DO ONE:

Make a natural cleaner. Check the box on page 5 to find out how to make one for tiles or glass. Then use it to clean every week for a month. Be even greener by using a cloth or an old T-shirt instead of a paper towel!

OR

Make a natural spray to use on plants, flowers, or vegetables. Look for directions in the sidebar. Then use the spray for two weeks and write down what you see. Did the spray help scare away bugs that hurt garden plants?



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OR

Take your own reusable bag to the grocery store or when helping run errands. For one month, count how many times you used your bag—that's how many plastic ones you kept out of the environment!

**For More FUN:** Decorate a cloth bag for you and your family to use when shopping.

### 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!

CHOICES — DO ONE:

How much trash can you stash? Weigh your trash for a week. Then see how many pounds you can reduce in your trash. Make containers for different types of recycling, and help family members use them. Is there anything in your recycling you could reuse, such as old jars or plastic bags?

**For More FUN:** Find out if your community has a composting plan, or if your family or a neighbor could use your compost. If so, make a container for compost, too!

OR

Recycle plastic bags. Collect 20 leftover plastic bags and take them back to a store that recycles them. Recycled plastic bags can be used to make plastic lumber for decks or swing sets and polar fleece for vests and coats!

**For More FUN:** Set up a place at school where other kids can bring in plastic bags. With a parent, take what you collect for a month to a store for recycling.

OR

Donate toys and clothes. With your family, go through your toys and clothes and set aside what you don't play with or wear anymore. (Make sure anything in this pile is in good enough shape that someone else could use it.) Then go online together and find a place that accepts donations. Bag up your things and drop them off!

### Sidebar: Words Worth Knowing

- A **LANDFILL** is an area where large amounts of trash are placed. The trash is usually covered with dirt.



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- COMPOST is a material made from broken-down plants and food scraps. Farmers and gardeners mix it with dirt to help new plants grow.

### Sidebar: 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 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.

### 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.

#### CHOICES — DO ONE:

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.

#### OR

Discover natural filters. Put a plant or other natural air filter in your favorite room. For two weeks, notice if you can tell a difference in the air, and write down how you feel.

**For More FUN:** Grow the plant from a seed, or decorate the plant pot. (Or both!)

#### OR

Make a natural air freshener. Work with an adult to make your own fresh scent for the house. Team up to boil 2 quarts of distilled water with 2 tablespoons of white vinegar. Add a few drops of scented oil or fruit and simmer for a few more minutes. One fresh scent to try is two sliced lemons with 1 tablespoon vanilla extract.

### 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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