

5 Ways to make your home more sustainable without compromising on luxury.

The spotlight on sustainability is continuing to grow across all industries and there is an undeniable importance and responsibility for those whose carbon footprint is particularly large. Several articles released the staggering figure that 40% of the planet's carbon emissions were contributed by the real estate industry alone.

Though 'going greener' is an important value held by many of our clients and professional network, knowing what to do to get started on that journey is often the challenge. Simone Suss, Founder of Studio Suss, Member of the Professional Practice and Sustainability Committee for the British Institute of Interior Design and Founding Signatory of Interior Design Declares, talks us through some top tips for homeowners.

1. Energy sources

If the house is running off fossil fuels, the first thing to consider is if you can change to an alternative supplier that uses renewable sources of electricity, such as the wind and sun. Although the concept may seem daunting, it takes just a phone call to change your gas and electricity supplier. Companies such as Octopus and Ovo run on renewable energy and have a straightforward process to follow.

If appropriate for the property, adding solar panels, ground source heat pumps and grey water harvesting help to make the most of these natural resources. In some conservation areas and for certain listed buildings it's not possible to

add solar panels, but otherwise, there should be no objections or obstacles. Things like ground source heat pumps and grey water harvesting are difficult to add on, but definitely to be recommended if building from scratch.



2. Energy consumption

The aim is to be as efficient as possible, so enhancing insulation to stop drafty windows and leaking taps is essential. Ensure the property holds the heat during the winter months by adding double glazing and good insulation.

Making changes to your tech and lighting can also be a quick and easy win. Switching the light systems to LED is about 90% more efficient than halogen and swapping your ultra-high-definition screen to one that doesn't require as much power can all improve energy efficiency and inevitably have a significant impact on rocketing bills.

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3. Minimise sending things to landfill

Before you rip out the kitchen, furniture, bathrooms and flooring which aren't to your taste, consider whether you can breathe new life into them and/or recycle items. For example, if the layout of a room works well but the colour scheme is dated, there are small upscaling tricks that are economical and sustainable. If there are aspects of the decor that have to go, consider selling them on Ebay or giving it away on Freecycle. At the outset, we always discuss with our clients the things that they might like to keep or remove and will assist them in the process. We've donated a great deal of furniture to BHF and Retrovius who will come and collect.

One of our clients wanted to change the home office into a nursery/playroom for their 5 children during lockdown. Rather than ripping out the

media unit and shelving, we re-purposed it for the nursery by giving the dark wood a lick of bright green paint and changing the handles for more fun ones. My approach also doesn't finish at the workplace, my son moved into my daughter's bedroom suite and the bathroom needed changing to include a shower instead of a bath. Rather than sending it to landfill, we Freecycled the bathroom suite. Someone came and collected it and even sent me lovely flowers. Everyone was a winner!

4. Re-upholster or refresh those heirlooms

If you have inherited a dining table which doesn't really go with the look of your home, or perhaps you have seating which has seen better days, remember that wood can be re-stained and furniture can be reupholstered. Not only are older items beautifully made, but if you have a history with an object, it is always worth the effort to do whatever you can to breathe new life into it.

Our clients had a wonderfully comfortable sofa for the snug in their new house, but the cushions they'd previously had designed were matching the colour scheme of their prior home. The material on the sofa was fine, so we re-upholstered the cushions for their new colour scheme, which all proved to be a much cheaper option than buying a new sofa and meant less to landfill.

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Always ask questions to suppliers about their stance on sustainability, for example, do they publish a sustainability statement on their website? Where are the products coming from and how are they made? What are they made from? It's often the responsibility of the client to ask the questions, but they can alternatively work with qualified interior designers, like Studio Suss, who carry out all the necessary research on their behalf.

5. When buying new, buy consciously

it sounds like a big ask, but it's important to think about every buying decision you make and how the items are sourced. We live in an age where almost every item has sustainable alternatives from paint, to wood, to lighting, to seating. Many companies have strong sustainability statements and as consumers you can choose to purchase from companies that are actively doing good for the planet. We always show our clients sustainable options for every buying choice.

