

## The Green Notebook

### Try Some “Unshopping”

Here’s a new twist when it comes to buying stuff—give “unshopping” a whirl. It is sure to save you some bucks and save our environment at the same time. Thanks to some research done by Co-op America ([www.coopamerica.org](http://www.coopamerica.org)), here is a list of Ten Things You Should Never Buy Again:

1. Styrofoam cups—Styrofoam never breaks down; it lasts forever. Try recyclable and compost-able paper cups or better yet, invest in some reusable mugs.
2. Paper towels—paper towels waste forest resources, landfill space and your money. Look for recycled, non-bleached products or, even better, only use dishtowels or rags which can be washed and reused.
3. Bleached coffee filters—dioxins from the bleaching process contaminate groundwater and air and are linked to cancer. Use unbleached paper filters or go for reusable filters such as washable cloth filters (yep, they’re out there).
4. Over packaged foods and other products—this is a biggie as excess packaging wastes resources and costs you much more (thanks to our society of convenience). Did you know roughly 33 percent of the trash in your household comes from packaging? Try to purchase products with minimal or reusable packaging—like the big jar of applesauce, not the package of 6 individual cups (a hard habit for me to break). It is best to buy in bulk if you can and use your own containers for dividing food.
5. Teak and mahogany—sure it looks great, but every year about 27 million acres of tropical rainforest (an area the size of our fair state) are destroyed. With the Amazon rainforest producing 40 percent of the world’s oxygen, this is not a problem just for those on the other side of the planet. When buying wood, look for Forest Stewardship Council certified wood and try to reuse wood and buy second-hand furniture or products made from used or salvaged wood.
6. Chemical pesticides and herbicides—you would think this doesn’t need explaining, but look around your house. American households use 80 million pounds of pesticides each year. The EPA was hard-pressed to find a fish that was pesticide-free when doing a sample from streams and wells in agricultural and urban areas of our nation. Poor fish? Our poor children! Try and use organic pest controllers or investigate integrated pest management.
7. Conventional household cleaners—who wants all those extra chemical compounds in your home environment, trapped in our nicely insulated homes? Look for nontoxic, vegetable-based, biodegradable cleaners or try making your own green.
8. Higher octane gas than you need—High octane gas releases more hazardous pollutants into the air, and may be bad for your car. Buy the lowest octane gas your car requires as listed in your owner’s manual. Better still; go for a hybrid on your next car purchase.
9. Toys made with PVC plastic—here’s a big one that’s been in the news lately. Makes me only want to buy cloth toys for the kids! PVC is a known carcinogen and is the least recycled plastic. Try to avoid plastics that are labeled as “PVC” or “#3.” Look for recycle codes #1 and #2 and take action to tell manufacturers to stop using PVC plastics, especially in children’s toys. Remember, supply and demand? WE, as consumers, can impact that!
10. Plastic forks and spoons—okay, put down your Spork and listen to this: disposable plastic utensils are not biodegradable and not recyclable in most areas. There are compost-able food service items out there (check out Biocorp)

but why not just carry your own utensils and food containers and just wash the dishes when you have a party.

I am trying to break most of these habits, too—baby steps, I tell myself. The first step is awareness. Then we can educate ourselves and do our best to make green purchasing decisions whenever we can. Enjoy your “unshopping” spree right now....

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