

Household Water-Use Assessment

How Water-Smart Is Your Household?

Is your household as water-efficient as it can be? This do-it-yourself household water-use assessment will help you understand how much water you use per person per day, identify leaks, and show you ways to reduce your water use. It will help you conserve water and save money at the same time!

1

How much water do you use?

Look at your water bill.

The best way to determine how much water per person your household uses in a day is to calculate it from your water bill. Your water bill does not display average daily use, but you can calculate it by dividing the number of "Current Usage Gallons" by the number of days in the billing cycle. Divide this by the number of people living in your home.



How Efficient Is Your Water Use?

How does your water usage measure up? Note that water use varies by season. Now that you have calculated your water use per person per day, as described above, use that number to compare your usage to the rest of the metro area.

Gallons Per Person Per Day

Winter	Summer	Rank	Comments
50 to 65	65 to 80	Efficient	You are using water wisely!! Share your techniques with your friends and neighbors.
70	91	Average	You use water like the average north Georgia resident. Learn how to conserve water and reduce your water bill.
Exceeds 70	Exceeds 100	Inefficient	You are using too much water. Find out how to reduce waste and significantly reduce the bill.

2

Detecting Leaks



A leaking faucet dripping one drip per second can waste 36 gallons of water per day.

Check for leaks within your house by first turning off all water-using fixtures (don't forget the icemaker if you have one). Then check the meter dial for any movement. If the meter is moving when all the water in the house is turned off, you have a leak somewhere in your home. Also, any sudden increases in your water bill may indicate a leak.

Pipes

There are some easy ways to look for leaks in a house. Water marks on floors, walls or ceilings can indicate indoor pipe leakage. Outside, standing water on the ground or on pavement when there has been no rain can indicate a broken underground pipe.

Toilets

Check for toilet leaks by putting some food coloring or dye tablets in the tank. Wait 30 minutes. **DO NOT FLUSH THE TOILET.** If the water in the bowl changes color, you have a leak. To determine which part is the problem, draw a line in the tank reservoir at the water level. Turn off the water supply to the toilet. Wait another 30 minutes. If the water level stays the same, the leak is the refill valve or float. If the water level drops below the line, the problem is the flush valve or flapper.

Faucets

Simple observation can tell you if you have a bathtub or sink faucet leak. All those drips can add up, so if you see one, replace worn washers and valve seals as soon as possible. Visit <http://www.awwa.org/advocacy/learn/conserves/dripcalc.cfm> to use the Drip Calculator and determine how much water those leaks can waste.

3

Checking & Changing Fixtures to Save Water



Faucets and showerheads

Your current fixtures may not be very efficient. Measure the flow rate of each faucet and showerhead in the house. To do this, you will need a plastic bag or bucket, a measuring cup and a second timer or a watch with a second hand.

- Place a bag or bucket to catch the entire stream of water before turning it on.
- Turn the water on full blast for exactly **five seconds**.
- Use a measuring cup to determine the volume of water in the bag/bucket.

Convert to gallons

- Multiply the number of cups of water (not the number of ounces) in the bag/bucket by 0.0625 = ____ gallons
- Multiply the number of gallons by 12 to get a flow rate in gallons per minute (gpm).

If your showerhead uses more than 2.5 gpm, you could save water by replacing it with a new low-flow showerhead. These showerheads conserve water by mixing air with water to reduce the amount of water but still feel like higher flowing fixtures. If your faucets (bathroom, kitchen or other) use more than 2.0 gpm, you need to change your existing aerator.

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Toilets

If your home was built before 1992, it may contain inefficient toilets and can use as much as five times more water than newer toilets! If you don't know how old your toilet is or if a toilet is not labeled as 1.6 gpf (gallons per flush), you may need to measure how much water the tank uses. Carefully shut off the valve to the toilet tank supply line. Then mark the water level in the tank reservoir. Flush the toilet. Now, re-fill the tank reservoir to the marked level using a measuring container to determine how much water is needed to flush the toilet. Once you've completed this task, don't forget to open the valve under the toilet.



Year Manufactured Or Installed	Toilet Water Use Gallons Per Flush
1994 – Present	1.6
1980 – 1994	4.5 – 3.5
1930 – 1980	8.0 – 5.0

Source: Amy Vickers, 2001

If your toilet uses more than 1.6 gallons per flush, you could save 50-75% by installing a new toilet. The savings on your water bill could pay for the new toilet within a few years.

Other Appliances

Clothes washers and dishwashers are other large water users in the home. Older appliances typically use more water and do not offer low water using options. Replacing these appliances with more efficient ones can save on both water and energy.

- **Washing Machine**– A non-conserving washer uses an average volume of 40.9 gallons of water per load. A water conserving front loading washer uses an average 24.3 gallons of water per load. (Source: AWWA/H2ouse.org)
- **Water Conserving Dishwashers**- A family that replaces a 12-gallon per load machine with a 6-gallon per load machine, and runs the dishwasher four times per week will save about 1,250 gallons of water per year. (Source: AWWA)

4

Changing Your Water Ways Inside & Outside

Inside

- Keep showers under five minutes. It will save 1,000 gallons a month.
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth. That's 200 gallons a week for a family of four.
- Turn off the water while you shave and save more than 100 gallons a week.
- Turn the water off while you shampoo and condition your hair and you can save more than 50 gallons a week.
- When washing your hands, don't let the water run while you lather.



- Turn water faucet off tightly.
- Run the dishwasher and clothes washer only when full. Save up to 700 gallons a month.
- Soak pots and pans instead of letting the water run while you scrape them clean.
- Use the garbage disposal sparingly. Save gallons every time by composting.
- Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator instead of running the water for a cool drink, so that every drop goes down you, not the drain.
- Wash produce in the sink or a pan partially filled with water instead of running tap water.
- Collect the water you use for rinsing produce and reuse it to water houseplants.
- When you clean your fish tank, use the water you've drained to water your plants. The water is rich in nitrogen and phosphorus, providing you with a free and effective fertilizer.
- Make sure you know where your master water shut-off valve is located. This could save gallons of water and damage to your home if a pipe were to burst.
- When you drop an ice cube or have left over ice from a drink, instead of throwing it in the sink, put it in a house plant.
- Winterize outdoor spigots when temps dip to 20 degrees F to prevent pipes from bursting or freezing.
- Insulate hot water pipes so you don't have to run as much water to get hot water to the faucet.
- Drop that tissue in the trash instead of flushing it and save gallons every time.
- Use the water collected from your dehumidifier to water plants.
- Bathe your pets outdoors in an area in need of water.
- *Do one thing each day that will save water. Even if savings are small, every drop counts.*

Outside

- Have a sprinkler? Make sure the spray heads are not watering hard surfaces like the driveway.
- Don't over-water your lawn. To promote strong root growth and drought tolerance in plants, water deeply and infrequently.
- Water during the early morning and late evening. There is generally less wind and lower temperatures and therefore less water loss to evaporation.
- Mulch around trees and plants to retain moisture around roots.
- Never leave the water running when using a hose. A hose nozzle with shut-off switch can save hundreds of gallons.
- Use a broom, not a hose, to clean the driveway or sidewalk.
- Raise your lawnmower blade to at least three inches. A lawn cut higher encourages grass roots to grow deeper.
- Direct downspouts and other runoff towards shrubs and trees, or collect and use for your garden.
- Weed your lawn and garden regularly. Weeds compete with other plants for nutrients, light and water.
- Fertilizers promote plant growth. Apply the minimum amount needed.
- When you give your pet fresh water, use the old water to water your plants.
- Install a rain shut-off device on your automatic sprinklers to eliminate unnecessary watering.
- *Call WSA to report leaks in the street or open or damaged fire hydrants.*

NOTE: *In the metro North Georgia area, all new in-ground landscape irrigation systems must have an automatic rain sensor shut-off switch, a shutoff device designed to halt irrigation in response to rainfall.*

**Encourage Friends and Neighbors to be a Part of
a Water-Conscious Community.**



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