



# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

## Conserving Water at Home

The average U.S. citizen uses 295 L (78 gal) of water per day at home on indoor uses (see figure). Many appliances, such as dishwashers, garbage disposals, and washing machines, need water. The growth of the suburbs, with their expansive landscaping that requires watering, is also responsible for increased water use.

As a water user, you have a responsibility to use water carefully and wisely. The cumulative effect of many people practicing personal water conservation measures has a significant impact on overall water consumption. You can adopt these measures yourself. The bathroom is a good place to start because most of the water used in an average home is for showers, baths, and flushing toilets.

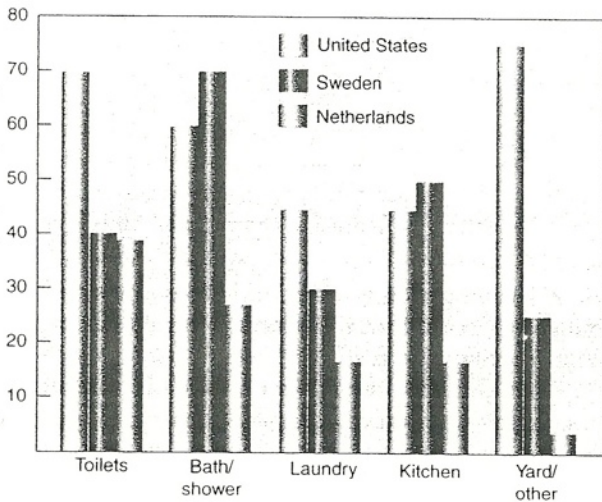
1. Install water-saving showerheads and faucets to cut down significantly on water flow. Low-flow showerheads, for example, reduce water flow from 5 to 9 gal per minute to

2.5 gal per minute. Replacing one old showerhead brings a home \$30 to \$50 each year in water and energy savings. You can also save water by replacing washers on leaky faucets.

2. Install a low-flush toilet or use a water displacement device in the tank of a conventional toilet. Low-flush toilets require only 2 gal or less per flush, compared with 5 to 9 gal for conventional toilets. To save water with a conventional toilet, fill an empty plastic laundry bottle with water and place it in the tank to displace some of the water. Don't put the bottle where it will interfere with the flushing mechanism; don't add bricks to the tank, because they dissolve over time and can cause costly plumbing repairs.
3. An important way to conserve water at home is to fix leaky fixtures. For example, a toilet with a silent leak could waste 30 to 50 gal of water each day.

You can test for a silent leak by putting food coloring in the reserve tank. If the color shows up in the toilet bowl before you flush, you have a leak.

4. If you are in the market for a washing machine, high-efficiency washing machines require less water than traditional models and also require less energy and less detergent. Always adjust the water level to match the size of the load.
5. Modify your personal habits to conserve water. Avoid leaving the faucet running. Allowing the faucet to run while shaving consumes an average of 20 gal of water; you will use only 1 gal if you simply fill the basin with water or run the water only to rinse your razor. You may save as much as 10 gal of water a day by wetting your toothbrush and then turning off the tap while you brush your teeth, as opposed to running the water during the entire process. Also, most of us take longer showers than are needed. Time yourself the next time you take a shower, and if it is 10 minutes or longer, work on reducing your shower time.
6. Surprisingly, you will save water by using a dishwasher, which typically consumes about 12 gal per run, instead of washing dishes by hand with the tap running—but only if you run the dishwasher with a full load of dishes. That 12 gal of water is used regardless of whether the dishwasher is full or half-empty.



### Residential water use in three highly developed countries.

Data, in liters of water per person per day, are for the United States, Sweden, and the Netherlands. (Data from Kindler, J. and C. S. Russell)

Remember that wasting water costs you money. Conserving water at home reduces your water bill and heating bill: If you are using less hot water, you are using less energy to heat that water.