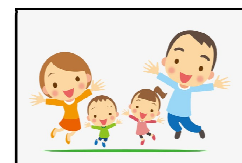




From the moment they are born, even the tiniest babies leave a large carbon footprint. All sorts of things parents buy for their child from diapers to toys eventually end up in a landfill. It is important to make eco-friendly decisions while purchasing. These tips for eco-friendly parenting will help you green up your act - whether you are looking to make a simple change or two, or integrate a full revamp of your family's habits.



1. Look for Green toys: When shopping for green toys for your child, here are some quick tips to keep in mind.

- Buy toys made with all natural materials, like wood and cotton. Do not go by the finish. Sometimes these are made with natural materials, but coated with artificial colours.
- Buying quality toys and fewer in number is another way to reduce carbon footprint in the playroom. Limit toy purchases. It not only increases sustainability, but also reduces clutter in the play area and reduces spending on toys.
- Check for items at home that can be re-purposed into toys.
- Avoid cheap plastics. It is difficult to avoid a plastic invasion completely in the playroom, better to go for green alternatives. For example, replace plastic blocks with more sustainable wooden ones.



Note: Long time contact with pollutants like - lead, manganese, mercury and arsenic- has been known to deteriorate growth, causes physical abnormalities, weaken the immune system and affect motor skills in children.

2. Buy local: Visit local shops and craft fairs. The handmade or homemade crafts communities made their products from naturally grown produce, which are biodegradable and compostable. It also helps children to interact with vendors, which helps them to get experience - based learning. It also boosts the local economy.



3. Do it yourself (DIY): Be more green and reuse items to make eco-friendly crafts. These tasks can be very pleasurable and very satisfying once they have been completed. Do not throw anything from home. Keep hold of any leftover materials as it can be used in the near future. Use into a DIY project, re-use as much leftover materials as possible. This is a great way to be eco-friendly and save money.



4. **Do Research:** Spend some time and do proper research for materials. Whenever buying games, puzzles, books and toys make sure they are printed on recycled and biodegradable materials. Before purchasing, spend some time to get acquainted with the labeling information and symbols on product. These symbols/information provide both specific information and If need help accessing information, where to contact. These communicate meaningful information to buyers.



5. **Donate or exchange the toys:** When planning for buying new toys or get a new wardrobe, make sure that donate old toys/clothes to a charity community. Develop the concept of “Sharing is Caring.” It is important to care and share because if you do, other people would follow in your footsteps and the world would be a happier place and will reduce the burden on the environment also.



6. **Restrict the time on electronic gadgets:** Many scientific papers have proven that the gadgets for children have a positive and negative impact. Research has also been conducted on how gadgets impact on cognitive and motor skills of children. As the gadgets are increasing day by day, it is leading to the technology addiction among children. Restrict the time spend on the gadgets and limit the time of watching TV. Encourage them to play outside with their friends and siblings. So they learn to interact and communicate with other children.



7. **Encourage nature -based activity:** In this digital age, families spend more time indoors and less explore nature. Studies show that children who spend time outside have better overall health and fitness levels, report better vision, less stress and depression and are more likely to have good social skills. The National Wildlife Federation also reports that spending time outside raises levels of Vitamin D, helping protect children from future bone problems, while reducing risk of heart disease, diabetes, and other health issues.

- **Nature walk:** It is an excellent way to stimulate a child’s admiration for the natural world. Go for a nature walk and ask them to tell you what they see, hear, smell or feel. Encourage them to feel the texture of barks of trees, rocks and dried up leaves. Ask them to collect whatever come in their path. Do not encourage to break or pluck. These are science experiences for young inquisitive minds.



- **Encourage Outdoor Play:** In a natural environment, children get to be physically active and this may help in burning calories and enhancing overall fitness.



- **Bird watching:** Get early in the morning and observe the birds in the sky. Observe their pattern sequence and flying style.



- **Sounds of nature:** Encourage children to hear the soothing sounds of nature. They can feel more mindful. Ask them to sit at silent places and close their eyes while they listen to the relaxing noises of nature. Teach them how to use visualisation techniques and their own imagination to feel the full effect.



- **Photography:** Let the children try their hand at photography while exploring nature by photographing plants, insects, and the landscape around them. Later make a scrapbook or frame their masterpieces.



- **Encourage to be a Nature Artist:** Children will begin to notice the beauty in nature if they are observing it from an artist's perspective. For an artistic outdoor activity, bring the easel and art supplies out to the park and have them paint or draw what they see around them.



- **Start a Green club in your locality-** Reach out to children/people who may be interested in joining the club. Start with simple ideas like recycling and DIY activities, composting and gardening, nature excursions and trekking, photography.



- **Make festivals Green:** Plan the activities, which have less impact on the environment, for festivals and celebrate with the community. Reusable items and recycled materials can significantly lessen the environmental impact of an event.



- **Gardening for children:** Visit to the different community garden and local market. Help children to identify different plants, fruits and vegetables. Select large, brightly coloured flowers and vegetables that grow quickly. Help them in watering plants, harvesting produce and planting seeds.



Note: Playing outside is vital in improving a child's emotional, intellectual, physical and social state.

Why try to explain miracles to your kids when you can just have them plant a garden? - Robert Brault

Source: <https://www.froddo.com/10-tips-for-choosing-eco-friendly-toys>, <https://www.rocksforkids.com/importance-of-nature-walk-for-preschoolers/>, <http://itechsolar.com/eco-friendly-toys/>, <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/the-impact-of-using-gadgets-on-children-2167-1044-1000296-96313.html>