

Green Tips

Ideas for families to help kids understand how they can be a part of making their world more environmentally friendly:

- Go on a trash and recycle walk around your neighborhood. Wear gloves and carry one large bag for trash and another for recyclables. You'll be amazed at what you find, and kids will gain a better appreciation of why it's so wrong to litter.
- Brainstorm ways you can save energy, and money, in your own household. Show kids your electricity, gas, and water bills for a month. Explain how expensive it can be to do things like running the air conditioning a lot. If you have solar panels on your roof, show that portion of the bill and how much energy it saves (and show kids where the panels are, in case they don't know what they look like.)
- Hold a friendly "Earth Saver" contest in your house for a week. Give out coupons for when kids save energy, such as turning out a light when leaving a room, or turning off the water when brushing their teeth. Whoever wins the most coupons gets a special prize.
- Give your kids their own canvas shopping bags to bring along when you go to the store. They'll remind you to bring your own too.
- On a hot day, have kids help you put together a simple meal in your Crockpot, and explain how it saves money not to use the oven.
- Save up your bottles and cans, and then take a family outing to a recycling center. Some centers have machines that let you put cans and bottles in one by one, which can be lots of fun for kids.
- Teach your kids how to ride their bikes if they don't already know how. Figure out places in our community that you can ride to, rather than drive. For example, take a family bike trip to a Ladera Ranch restaurant on the weekend. For children too big for a bike seat but too little to ride their own bikes for long distances, a "tagalong" that attaches to a parents' bike is a great option.
- If you ordinarily drive to school, get up 20 minutes early once a week so that you can walk or ride bikes with your kids. No matter where you live, it shouldn't take longer than that to get to Oso Grande.
- On cold nights, lower the heat and give each member of your household a hot water bottle. It's fun to cozy up to one, and the heat can last for hours.
- Give kids an Earth Friendly chore list. Examples could include closing blinds on hot days and opening them on cool ones, sorting bottles and cans before taking them to a recycling center, or raking leaves and putting them in the Green Waste receptacle.
- Have your kids go through each closet in the house to find extra drycleaner hangers to recycle next time you visit the drycleaner.
- Show kids how to save paper after they've printed something off of their laptops, and re-use it the next time they print. You can also show them how to set the printer to double-sided printing.
- Help your kids pick out reusable thermoses to bring to school every day, rather than bringing disposable water bottles, juice boxes, or juice cartons.
- Put a small bucket in your kids' showers to use while the water is warming up. Kids can use it to water plants in your garden.

- Teach your kids all of the different materials that we can recycle in Ladera so they'll understand what not to throw away: paper, cardboard, plastic, and metals. Make sure they know how to rinse out their yogurt, pudding or applesauce cups and dispose of them with your other recyclables.
- Plant a vegetable garden in containers on your patio. During cooler times of year, you can easily grow veggies like spinach, lettuce and peas. In the summer, tomatoes and peppers work great in containers (some varieties are specifically designed to grow in pots.) Kids are also much more likely to try a new food if they can pick it from their own garden.
- Appoint one child in your family as the "energy czar" for the week. This child will be responsible for monitoring energy usage and making sure family members don't waste energy. Have your "czar" go through your home to look for "power-suckers," such as appliances that are plugged in but aren't being used at the moment. These might include phone chargers, coffee-makers, can-openers, and power-strips.