

The Filipino Citizen's Guide to Environmental Protection

A Practical Handbook for Households and Communities

Introduction

Under the Philippine Constitution, the State guarantees the right of the people to a "balanced and healthful ecology." However, this right comes with the responsibility to protect our natural resources. This guide outlines practical, legal, and actionable steps every Filipino can take to contribute to environmental sustainability, based on Republic Acts (RA) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) guidelines.

1. Solid Waste Management (RA 9003)

The **Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000 (RA 9003)** mandates "Segregation at Source." This means waste must be separated *inside the home* before it is collected by the barangay or garbage truck.

A. Mandatory Segregation Categories

Every Filipino household must separate waste into at least three bins:

1. Biodegradable (Nabubulok):

- *Examples:* Leftover rice (kaning-baboy), vegetable peelings, fish entrails, garden trimmings, wet paper.
- *Action:* Composting or use as animal feed. Do not mix with plastics.

2. Recyclable (Narereresiklo):

- *Examples:* PET bottles (soft drinks), glass bottles (patis/toyo containers), cardboard cartons, newspapers, tin cans.
- *Action:* Wash and dry dirty containers before throwing them away. Sell to local junk shops ("Mangangalakal") or donate to the Barangay Materials Recovery Facility (MRF).

3. Residual (Itatapon/Non-Recyclable):

- *Examples:* Candy wrappers, sachets (shampoo/coffee), used sanitary napkins, disposable diapers.
- *Action:* This is the *only* waste the garbage truck should collect for the sanitary landfill.

B. Composting at Home

For households with limited space, the DENR recommends these methods:

- **Twin Pit Method:** Dig two small pits. Fill one; when full, cover it with soil and switch to the other. By the time the second is full, the first is fertilizer.
- **Flower Pot Composting:** For condo/apartment dwellers. Layer soil and kitchen scraps in a clay pot. Cover strictly to prevent flies.

C. Prohibited Acts (Don't Do This!)

- **Open Burning (Pagsisiga):** Burning leaves or trash is strictly prohibited under RA 9003 and the Clean Air Act (RA 8749). It releases toxic carcinogens.
 - **Littering:** Throwing even a cigarette butt or candy wrapper in public places is punishable by law.
 - **Dumping in Waterways:** Never throw trash in Esteros or canals; this causes flooding.
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2. Energy Conservation (DOE Guidelines)

The Philippines has some of the highest electricity rates in Asia. Conserving energy helps the grid and reduces your bill.

A. The "Energy Label" Guide

- **Look for the Yellow Tag:** When buying air conditioners or refrigerators, check the DOE Energy Guide (Yellow Label).
- **High EER is Better:** Look for a higher **Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER)**. A higher number means lower electricity costs.
- **Inverter Technology:** Inverter appliances adjust their power usage automatically and can save 30-60% on electricity compared to non-inverters.

B. Practical "Tipid-Kuryente" Tips

- **Phantom Load:** Unplug appliances (TV, electric fan, microwave) when not in use. A plugged-in appliance still consumes "standby power."
 - **Aircon Settings:** Set your AC to **24°C or 25°C**. This is the "sweet spot" for comfort and efficiency. Setting it to 18°C forces the compressor to work 100% of the time, doubling your cost.
 - **Peak Hours:** Try to iron clothes or use washing machines during off-peak hours (before 9:00 AM or after 9:00 PM) to reduce strain on the Luzon/Visayas grid.
 - **LED Lights:** Replace incandescent bulbs with LED. They use 85% less energy and last longer.
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3. Water Conservation (Clean Water Act - RA 9275)

Water scarcity is a growing issue, especially during El Niño months.

- **Rice Washing (Pinaghugas):** Do not pour the water used to wash rice down the sink. Use it to water plants; it is nutrient-rich.
 - **Check for Leaks:** A dripping faucet can waste up to 20 liters a day.
 - **Rainwater Harvesting:** Use a simple drum (sahod-ulang) to catch rainwater from your roof gutter. Use this for cleaning the garage, flushing the toilet, or watering plants.
 - **Kitchen Oil: NEVER** pour used cooking oil down the sink. It hardens and clogs pipes (causing "fatbergs"). Cool the oil, put it in a bottle, and dispose of it with residual waste or give it to specialized recyclers.
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4. Protecting Biodiversity

The Philippines is a "megadiverse" country but is also a biodiversity hotspot.

- **Endemic Species:** Know that the Philippine Eagle, Tarsier, and Tamaraw are protected. Possession of these species without a permit is illegal under the **Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act (RA 9147)**.
 - **Native Trees:** When planting, choose native Philippine trees (Narra, Molave, Kamagong) instead of invasive exotic species like Mahogany, which can kill local soil biodiversity.
 - **Report Wildlife Trade:** If you see someone selling wild birds, lizards, or turtles in the market or online, report it to the DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB).
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5. Community Action & Reporting

- **Barangay Assembly:** Attend your Barangay Assembly and ask about the "Solid Waste Management Committee." By law, every barangay must have one.
 - **Citizen Watch:** If you see factories emitting black smoke or dumping chemicals in the river, you can report it to the **Environmental Management Bureau (EMB)**.
 - *Hotline: 1-800-1888-8749 (Bantay Kalikasan)* or the DENR Action Center.
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Quick Reference: Important Agencies

- **DENR (Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources):** Primary agency for environmental laws.
- **EMB (Environmental Management Bureau):** Handles pollution, air quality, and waste permits.
- **CCC (Climate Change Commission):** Handles policy on climate adaptation.

- **LLDA (Laguna Lake Development Authority):** For issues specific to the Laguna de Bay region.