

The green-computing movement, which began with [the Energy Star program](#) back in 1992, strives to ensure that the computer industry adopts various environmentally sustainable practices, such as creating more environmentally sound products and ensuring that those products' manufacturing processes, overall design, everyday use and eventual disposal have as small an environmental impact as possible.

It's no secret that not every manufacturer is as eco-centric as they could be, but with the help of [certain product makers](#) and a handful of selected software, you can do your part.

Bad Eco-Design

One example of poor eco-design comes courtesy of the new USB Eco Button.

Saving some money on your energy bills is one thing, but saving the entire planet is a much more admirable goal. Unfortunately the [recently released USB Eco Button](#), which promises to save both the planet and your wallet, fails on both counts, adding to the ever-growing list of [useless gadgets](#).

The [device](#), which is essentially a USB-powered plastic button, puts any Windows based machine, except those running Windows 7, into a [low-power energy saving mode](#). Once activated, the included software will then monitor your computer's power usage, in addition to recording how much CO2 the Eco Button has saved.

The problem? The Eco Button is largely unnecessary, since such low-power modes can be implemented via software-only fixes. Considering the materials and energy used to manufacture it, the Eco Button could be doing more harm than good. The final icing on this not-so-green cake? The [\\$14 'Eco Button'](#) seems to be a second-rate imitation of another [previously released--and trademarked--'Eco button'](#).

That said, there are numerous other ways to green up your OC.

Lowering your CO2 emissions ([and in turn, your bills](#)) by reducing your power consumption can be achieved by turning to more environmentally friendly products and services. Francine Kizner looks at how you can [make your office more green](#) with this run-down of eight handy eco-gadgets, but for those more concerned with [going green at home](#) be sure to read over the following tips:

Now that we've established that you do not need a plastic button to put your computer to sleep, here are a number of programs that can do the job by putting your PC into the deepest sleep possible without compromising your session:

In addition to the various software solutions, the major OSes all have built-in power-saving modes, such as OS X's Energy Saver and Windows' Power Options control panel and sleep mode, which my colleague Jason Cross [discusses in greater detail here](#).

Changing your PC's various components, amongst other gadgets, to greener alternatives is another way to reduce your environmental impact. Apple is well-known for its recent green efforts, even [managing to please Greenpeace this year](#) and moving up a place in their rankings. Sony Ericsson has also been getting in on the eco-act this year with [greener cell phones](#). Unfortunately due to the economic downturn the interest in [tweaking products to be green has decreased](#), but some companies are still offering ecological hardware options:

By using some of the products mentioned above, along with various other alternatives, you can save yourself some money over time, while doing your bit for Planet Earth.

References

- Worrell Water Technologies - [How Living Machines Work](#)
Image Credits:
[Green Planet / Wikimedia Commons / Chrisbabi / C.C. 3.0 License](#)
[Planet Green Logo / Wikimedia Commons / Msw1002 / Public Domain](#)
Screenshot of Living Machines used by permission from [Worrell Water Technologies](#)
- Green Computing - Microsoft Research - [The Architecture Journal](#)