

Cars and Computers – When to Replace Them

Why we care

For most products we buy the greatest environmental impact is in production. For example, about 80% of a home computer's lifecycle energy is from its manufacture. Only 20% is from use. In addition, computers are made with hazardous materials such as toxic metals and bromated flame retardants.

For some products, the greatest impacts come from the product's use. A car is good example. Even though raw material extraction and the production of steel, plastic, and paint used to produce the car are major polluters, driving the car has a greater impact in terms of air pollution and energy consumption. The average car uses as much energy in about 2 years as is required to make the car and all of its components.

Simple, positive change

- Replacing your car with a higher mileage vehicle will generally save lifecycle energy. If your old car gets particularly low mileage, the ideal would be to scrap it and take it out of the system.
- You can lengthen the life of your computer by taking the following steps:
 - Add operating memory to speed up your computer.
 - Check the specifications of your computer to make sure that you have the fastest supported central processing unit.
 - Keep operating and security software updated.
 - Run diagnostic software, such as Regcure, regularly to clean up the computer.
- If you do decide to purchase a new computer, donate your old one to Free Geek for reuse instead of recycling it.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at info@earthleaders.org.