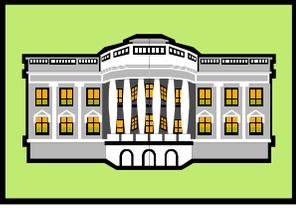




What Makes a Building Green?



The Green House



What is the best way to make a white house or *any* house green? It's not by painting it green, but by doing things to make it a

healthier, more environmentally friendly house to be in! When we make buildings and homes environmentally friendly, this is called **Green Building**.

What is it Made From?



The first thing to consider when designing a green building is what materials will be used

to build it. Will it be made from wood that comes from **endangered**, old growth forests that are in danger of disappearing around the world, or will it be made from wood that was **salvaged**, or reused, from an old farmhouse that is falling down? A green building would never be made using new wood from an old growth forest, because this would destroy the ancient forest and harm the animals that live there. Since green buildings are environmentally friendly, they are made using different materials that don't harm the environment. For instance, we can use straw **bales**, or bundles, to build a home, or we can follow the example of the Native Americans and build our homes using earth, or **adobe**. This is called **earth architecture** and is a very sturdy way to build a home. In fact, buildings made from earth architecture thousands of years ago in ancient Persia are still standing today!

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Natural Light

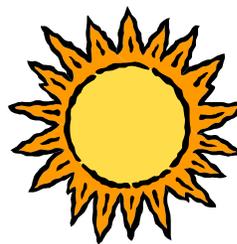


Our sun is an amazing star. Not only does it provide energy for plants to grow, and life on Earth to survive, but it's also our planet's light bulb! Studies show

that whenever buildings let the natural light of the sun in, people feel better and are happier in that building. As a matter of fact, when classrooms get a lot of **natural light** from the sun, students find it easier to study and learn more!

Green buildings **incorporate**, or use, different ways to bring in natural light. This includes adding lots of windows and putting in **skylights** that are like windows in the ceiling. Some buildings even put in **light shelves** that help bring light in by bouncing it up to the ceiling and deeper into a room. This **diffuses**, or softens, the bright glare that can come from direct sunlight.

Clean Energy



Every building needs electricity and other kinds of **energy**, or power, in order to be useful. Energy is what allows us to turn on the lights, use a computer, or bake chocolate chip cookies.

Green buildings are smart about the way they use and **conserve**, or save energy. There are many clean sources of energy that don't pollute our environment the way burning **fossil fuels** like oil, coal and gas do. These **alternative**, or different sources of energy come from the sun as **solar power**, the wind as **wind power**, and the ocean tides as **tidal power**. Green buildings often have



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solar panels on their rooftops. These panels collect energy from the sun and use it to make electricity for use in the building. Other solar panels directly heat water that can be used to wash clothes or heat radiators to keep us warm.

Healthy Inside



While it's very important to consider the kinds of materials used in a green building, the amount of natural light that is being let in, and its source of energy, it's also very important to make sure the inside of the building is healthy for people to be in. Many of the items we find in our buildings today are full of **synthetic** or man-made materials that are not natural. These synthetic materials can be very useful, but they can also create problems for our health and the environment.

The Problem with PVC



Things like plastic and **vinyl** are synthetic materials people have created to help make or **manufacture** thousands of different items like furniture, flooring, pipes and paint. Even though these synthetic materials can be useful, they also create problems. Vinyl for instance, is a type of plastic called **PVC** (polyvinyl chloride) that can be made soft and **flexible** or easy to bend. PVC gives off poisonous gases or **toxic fumes** when it's being made or burned. Whenever vinyl or PVC is in our furniture, computers or carpets, tiny toxic **particles** or bits are released into the air in small doses. Over time, these poisons can gather in our body and create sickness. Because of this, some companies are now choosing to stop using

PVC in the products that they manufacture. When building a green building, careful choices are always made to **prevent** or stop PVC from being used to make or furnish it. This helps keep the building healthy inside.

Green Paint



Another thing that keeps the inside of a green building healthy is the type of paint that is used. Some paints contain **toxic** or poisonous chemicals that create fumes. These fumes can be

unhealthy for us to breathe. Safer paints, called **non-VOC** (Volatile Organic Compounds) paints, are a lot less toxic and much better for us to use. These paints don't give off dangerous, chemical fumes and they are safer for the environment.

Saving Water



People who build green buildings understand how important it is to **conserve** or save our fresh water. They **install** or put in special **low-flow** toilets, showerheads and faucets that use less water and

save money on the water bill. Some green buildings even have a system that recycles water! For instance, instead of letting water go down the shower or kitchen drain to be carried away by city pipes, the used water or **gray water** gets collected and used to water the garden.

Our Green Future



Every day, more and more people are learning how green buildings are better for our health and the health of the environment. Maybe one day, you'll live in a green house or help design even better green buildings!