

Virtual Water Use

When thinking about how much water I use daily, my mind instantly goes to the specific times in my day where I am interacting with water directly, like when drinking or bathing. What is often forgotten is the water required to power our lives, from the food that we eat to the cars that we drive, everything, at some point, had to use water somewhere along the line to get into our hands and our homes.

I will find the water footprint for 5 different items in my life, and those will be a can of soup, my iPad, my backpack, my toothpaste, and my car. These items are all (with the exception of the single use can of soup) are items I use everyday, and they are ones that would make my life much harder if I no longer had them.

1) Soup:

I love soup, but I often run out of time to make my own, so I buy some cans that I use when I have to get a quick meal. I really like whatever brand's version of vegetarian vegetable that I can find, mostly because I know that since it says vegetarian right on the front, that I don't have to comb through the ingredients to make sure that there is no meat.



Considering the production of the can, the growing of the vegetables, the transportation, machinery, and energy cost of getting the can and its contents to me, it is probably safe to say that making my own soup rather than buying single cans of it is the more environmentally considerate option, which I should probably spring for more often.

2) iPad:

I use my iPad as my personal computer, and am using it now to make this document, so I use it frequently. Unfortunately, the production of anything technological requires lots of mining of precious elements, the use of very intricate machinery, a huge human labor cost, and a lot of transportation. I need a computer in order to do things like my classwork and this challenge, among many other things, so replacing this machine with typical pen and paper isn't an option, and buying a different product just to throw away or sell my current, perfectly operational device is also not reasonable, so there isn't a whole lot that I can do here.



3) Backpack:

My backpack is awesome and I love it so much. It's a Patagonia Black Hole 25L purple backpack that has a green bandana that I got from the first

year that I worked at summer camp, 3 years ago. The brand Patagonia is often applauded for its environmental concern and action, so I hope that this is reflected in the water footprint. In my research, it shows that Patagonia has a program where they refurbish and resell used products, cutting down on the production water footprint. The service centers' think about their water consumption and mention it on their website, where they're site in Ventura uses waterless urinals, dual flush sensor toilets, and smart irrigation systems. They do mention areas where they could do better, which, while it is not ideal to see areas for improvement, it is refreshing to see a company showing the consumer things that are less than ideal about the company itself, rather than covering up and lying. Although these are relatively small infractions, it is nice that they mentioned that the shower heads they have are not low-flow, and that the washing machines they have for testing materials are not high efficiency. Overall, I am glad that my backpack came from an ethical and environmentally friendly company, but they still have some work to do, like the rest of us.



4) Toothpaste:

The toothpaste I use is pretty obscure, and I only use it because my mom bought it for me one time and I never consider switching. My toothpaste is the brand Rembrandt. This brand is, like I mentioned, not very well-known, but speaking generally for toothpaste, it would probably require a lot of water to make the plastic tube it comes in, the product itself, the transportation, and even the water I use when using the product. After doing the body challenge the other day, I have been wanting to switch my toothpaste anyway, and this just gives me another reason to find a toothpaste from a company that produces products in an environmentally friendly way.



5) Car:

My car is a 2010 Mercury Milan hybrid that is also the love of my life. She is a pearly white color with a dark grey interior, and has the cutest tail lights and navigation system. I also enjoy the color changing interior lights. Since it is a hybrid, I hope that it would be environmentally focused



and have a relatively low water footprint compared to other cars made around the same time. In general, cars take a lot of energy, and therefore water, to produce, and the fact that, even though it is a hybrid, it still consumes gasoline to function, which is just not a sustainable option in the long run. Although replacing my car is not an option right now, in my future I would want to consider switching to an electric vehicle, if having a vehicle is even required in my life at that point.



I was unable to find any source that would give me exact amounts of water used to produce any of my items, but I would imagine that considering production cost and replaceability, my items would be ranked accordingly, from best to worst:

- 1) Backpack
- 2) iPad
- 3) Car
- 4) Toothpaste
- 5) Soup

Food and body products are short-lived in our world, so replacing them is easy. I know that I will eventually have to replace my car, so I can opt for an even more environmentally friendly car in the future. Since technology in general is very hard to produce without a large environmental impact, I would probably just try to use my technologic product for as long as I could, recycling it, and then trying to only get the ones that I need (I need a computer for school, but do I need a fancy speaker when my phone is already loud enough? no.) will work. My backpack has a lifetime warranty, and comes from a good company that is only trying to be more environmentally friendly than it is, so I don't even know if there is a better option for replacing my backpack, and even if there were, I doubt that it would even need replacing for a long time.