

# Have a **green**, eco-friendly prom

*Vox resident tree-hugger Kennedy Krossen shares how to have a prom that is Earth-friendly as well as fun.*

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**GRAPHIC BY JAMES ATKINS / LAKE CITY HIGH SCHOOL**

So you are on the road to a great prom night, but are you going to get there in a stretch Hummer limo or on a bicycle built for two? There are a multitude of great alternatives to the usual carbon-pumping prom.

From the basics, like not drinking bottled water or drinks, to making your own organic biodegradable prom outfit, a green prom should encompass the green mantra: "recycle, renew and reuse."

## **Apparel and Accessories:**

Beauty pageant-style gowns and fur stoles are out, and reusable dresses and shawls are in. A reusable dress will not only limit the impact on the environment, it will also limit the impact on the wallet. Prom dresses are usually worn only once and can cost up to hundreds of dollars. If you just have to have that one-time-wear prom dress, go vintage. Vintage will not only give you a unique look, it can also save you the embarrassment of seeing "your" dress on someone else that night.

If you are not into the whole "new to you" thing, here are some eco-friendly reminders.

Green is not just good for the cute and cuddly animals and the greenery that lends its namesake to the movement; it is also good for people. Take time to check clothing labels to ensure your garments are made in the U.S.A. or another country with good labor laws, instead of a country that "employs" young children.

To be nice to the planet, you could find clothes that contain biodegradable, organic fabrics. The Internet is a great place to find the newest and best green looks in fashion. There are many web sites, such as [www.thefindgreen.com](http://www.thefindgreen.com) that are dedicated to green fashion and products.

If you are the creative type, then you could make your very own outfit, or alter an old one. With a little alteration, a modern style can be added to most dresses. To keep it green, choose biodegradable materials, like cotton, hemp and silk. They will not stay in landfills

long, quickly turning into food for little organisms that will make them disappear.

And although fun, making the duct tape outfit is not so green.

Here is something to think about if you are considering leather accessories. A U.N. report published in November 2006 warns that cattle-rearing generates more global warming greenhouse gases (as measured in carbon dioxide emissions) than transportation. This means that cow flatulence is more of a problem in the fight against climate change than driving an S.U.V. The report goes on to say that livestock also contribute 65 percent of human-related nitrous emissions, which has 296 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide.

Borrowing items for prom may sound cheap, and it is. But cheap is not a bad word. You might be surprised to

find that perfect, classic accessory in your mother's or grandmother's closet. Most of us learned to share in kindergarten, so why not apply this concept to prom items?

At the very least, recycle, because there are many underprivileged youths in Spokane that could use

your cast-offs. Give your used outfit to a thrift shop, or, better yet, contact a youth outreach program like Spokane's own Crosswalk, which helps homeless teens get an education. If you have younger siblings or friends, expensive hand-me-downs are always appreciated. Any of these options will lengthen a prom outfit's life, or at least double it.

To go all-out green, you could use some locally-grown flowers in your boutonniere or corsage (saving on transport costs to ship exotic flowers). Alternatively, instead of impressing your date with a bouquet, forgo the flowers and give a potted plant. This option is not as romantic, but it is longer-lasting - hopefully not outlasting your relationship with your prom date.

## **Dinner:**

Whether you dine in or out, keep it simple and go green. If you are dining out, eat at a restaurant serving vegetarian or vegan cuisine (vegan means no animal products were used in the making of the food).

Vegan and vegetarian food require fewer resources to produce. According to food geographer Georg Borgstrom,

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producing a one-pound steak requires 2,500 gallons of water. Also, the previously mentioned carbon dioxide and nitrous gas emissions of livestock make a vegan or vegetarian meal the greener meal (literally and figuratively).

## **Transportation:**

Believe it or not, the traditional limo idea is alright, as long as you fill it up with other couples. Carpooling is always an eco-friendly way to go.

Depending on how green-minded your date may be, bikes, skates or walking may be asking a bit too much, even for the most devoted tree-hugger in heels.

## **The actual dance:**

If you happen to be on the Prom Committee for your school, here are

some "green" ideas:

Organize a "Prom Swap." Much like a ski swap, but with potential prom-goers bringing their once-used items, such as dresses and shoes, and trading them with others.

Use local plants instead of flowers; then replant them around your school.

Use biodegradable decorations, and save them during clean up instead of throwing them away to reuse them year to year.

Use biodegradable cups and plates made from corn "plastic" or bamboo. They compost in just over a month.

Use organic, fair-trade food.

Consider a "green theme." This theme is much fresher than the over-used and corny Hawaiian/paradise theme; you could even vote a "King and Queen of Green."