

- A Pair work** What do you think “living off-grid” means? Why might someone want to do this? Discuss and share your ideas with the class.

Living off-grid

Steve Fagan hasn't paid for electricity since he began living “off-grid” ten years ago. Instead, Fagan installed photovoltaic cells that produce solar energy and a hydropower system that uses running water to make free electricity.

Living *off-grid* means that a home isn't connected to a utility company's distribution grid and instead uses alternative energy sources like hydroelectricity, wind, or solar energy. Concerns about the environment, rising power costs, and recent innovations in renewable energy technologies have made living off-grid an attractive option for people like Fagan who live in rural areas. “When the sun shines, we use the solar power, but when it's raining, our home runs on hydro,” says Fagan.

Fagan explains that hydroelectricity is power that is generated from naturally running water, and is simple to install. While not everyone is as resourceful as Fagan, he says, “Anyone who has a waterfall on their property could install hydro fairly inexpensively.”

Fagan admits that you need to learn to live simply when you're off-grid. For example, he never leaves on the lights and uses only energy-efficient appliances. His drinking water comes from a spring on his land, and he heats his house with a wood stove in the winter.

Fagan claims the reason he is so conscientious about consumption is to be energy independent, but he also says, “Many people never think about what they're spending or wasting on electricity. It's easy to leave a light or TV on when you live on the grid, but it's just not appropriate to be so wasteful.”

Fagan's sustainable lifestyle also includes running his diesel automobiles using recycled vegetable oil. He gets the used frying oil free from local restaurants and pours the oil directly into his tank and mixes it with diesel fuel. “People argue that it will mess up my engine, but I've been doing it for years already, and I spend less than \$10 every 5,000 miles to drive my vehicles.”

Source: “No Power Bill! And It's Legal” by Lori Solbakken

- B** Write these words and phrases in the correct columns in the chart. Then add two more items of your own to each.

photovoltaic cells	waterfall	sunshine
recycled vegetable oil	wood	rain

Solar energy	Hydropower	Alternative fuel

- C Group work** Make a list of five ways you could simplify your life in order to spend less and waste less. Then share your ideas with the class.