

Reducing your carbon footprint: What Can You Do?

Although the United States has only 5% of the world's population, we produce close to 25% of the world's carbon dioxide emissions. Carbon dioxide is the largest source of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, which is responsible for the greenhouse effect and global warming. The average American household generates 55,000 pounds of carbon dioxide per year. With an average family size of four, that means that each person produces 13,750 pounds per year.

Category	Action	Carbon Saved	Challenges	Your changes
Reduce solid waste	Reduce your waste-find out how much you currently generate, then aim to reduce that by 10 gallons a week	1,000 pounds per year	Difficult to sustain unless you change your buying habits	
	Recycle everything you can at home	1,000 pounds per year	Difficult if you live in an area with minimal recycling	
Save water	Reduce your shower time to 5 minutes	3 pounds per shorter shower= 175 pounds/year		
	Use a low-flow showerhead	250 pounds per year	Cost about \$25	
	Reduce the number of times you run your dishwasher	Save 3 pounds each time you don't use it = 175 pounds/year		
	Change the way you do the dishes-soak and wash in one tub, rinse in another	Save 2.5 pounds each time = 125 pounds/year		
	Reduce number of hot or warm water laundry loads (use cold water instead)	Save 5 pounds for each load less = 250 pounds/year for one load a week		
	Reduce the number of dryer loads	Save 4 pounds for each load less = 200 pounds/year		
Save energy	Set your thermostat to 65-68 during the day when people are home, and 55-58 at night or when no one is home	1400 pounds per year		

	Ride your bike or walk to school twice a week	1600 pounds per year	Safety can be a concern	
	Drive less	Every gallon of gasoline emits 26 pounds of carbon		
	Drive slower (below 60mph)	600 pounds per year		
	Install five compact fluorescent light bulbs	500 pounds total	Each bulb costs around \$7	
	Seal cracks and air leaks in your home	800 pounds total		
	Turn off appliances, and unplug ones that are still 'live' even when they're off = TVs, mobile phone chargers, and especially anything with a large AC adaptor	Up to 1000 pounds per year		
	Ask your parents to make sure their car tires are properly inflated	250 pounds per year	Make sure you get help from an adult	
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle!				
	Recycle, swap, or reuse old clothes	Save 5.5 pounds of carbon for every 2.2 pounds of clothes you recycle		
	Drink tap water	Each bottle (1 liter) of water releases 0.6 pounds of carbon during manufacturing		
	Use an older push-style lawn mower	80 pounds of carbon per year		
	Use a rake to pick up leaves	Saves 2600 pounds of carbon per hour		
	Plant a tree	Save 25 pounds per tree	Some trees cost lots of money	
	Reduce the number of times you go snowmobiling (try cross country skiing or snowshoeing instead!)	If you don't normally do these things, you can't use this option. But, if you do, then each time you decide		

		to snowshoe instead, you save 480 pounds of carbon.		
	Reduce the number of times you go jet-skiing (learn how to kayak or canoe instead!)	If you do this normally, each time you decide to go canoeing, you save 960 pounds of carbon,		
	Buy local food-this reduces the amount of carbon released for transporting the food	If you buy only local food, you can save 660 pounds per year		
Total				

Here are some other ideas for your family:

-**Invite a professional to do an energy audit of your home.** There is a lot of information on the NYSERDA website for New York homeowners: www.nyserda.org

-**Give ecologically friendly presents**-a compact fluorescent light bulb, a low-flow showerhead, a reuseable coffee mug, a tree, or even some seeds!

-**Start asking questions when you purchase goods:** ask for local produce in the supermarket, ask where the fish you order at the restaurant came from, ask if you can fill up your own mug at Dunkin' Donuts, ask about the gold or gems you buy at a jewelers' ...the more you know, and the more pressure we put on businesses, the more they will change!

-**Buy wood with the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) label,** or ask your local home improvement store to purchase these types of products.

-**Contact your representatives in Congress** and ask them to reduce carbon emissions in the U.S.

-Support local greening initiatives or start your own!

-Find out more about what you can do by visiting www.moveon.org, www.climatevoters.org, www.stopglobalwarming.org, www.ucusa.org, www.environmentaldefense.org among others.