

CREATING A BETTER CLIMATE FUTURE

CLIMATE ACTION GUIDE

PHILIP KENT-HUGHES





Welcome

This Climate Action Guide is a reference for the book, *Creating a Better Climate Future*, by Philip Kent-Hughes. This guide has been created to help you take action for emissions reductions. This and other guides can be downloaded at: climate-action.org.



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Introduction

Welcome to the guide for the book, *Creating a Better Climate Future*, by Philip Kent-Hughes. This guide has been created to help you plan and implement emissions reductions in your own life. This is where you can set an objective, make plans, enter information, and track your progress. This document is set up as a form, so for each section that has an action to complete you can type in the answers, then tick the box on the right as seen in the examples below. If the action does not apply to your situation, you can put "not applicable" and tick the box.

 Personal action	Create a new identity
Your new identity Write out a belief statement about your own new identity and who you want to become. You can also write it down and put it on the fridge or other places you might see it often.	
<input type="text" value="I am living a sustainable, net-zero emissions lifestyle."/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

 Personal action	Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
	Check freshness Once or twice a week, go through the fridge and check meat, dairy, fruit, and vegetables for dates and freshness. Then prioritize eating food that could soon go bad. Use mature fruit and vegetables in smoothies or juices.	Check Fridge Check cupboards Check Freezer	Person A	Every time before shopping Saturday morning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The section *Tips to Help You Be Successful* might be useful, especially if you find some of the actions difficult at first. This can be found at the beginning of Part 3 in the book.

I wish you good luck and success.

Philip Kent-Hughes

PLEASE NOTE: Any website links are correct at the time of publication. Please take care with your internet security when accessing third-party websites. I do I benefit from any of these organizations.

A New Emergency Plan to Solve Climate Change

*"The climate we experience in the future
depends on our decisions now."*

*"Our choices will reverberate
for hundreds, even thousands,
of years."*

—Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),
Sixth Assessment Report (2021)

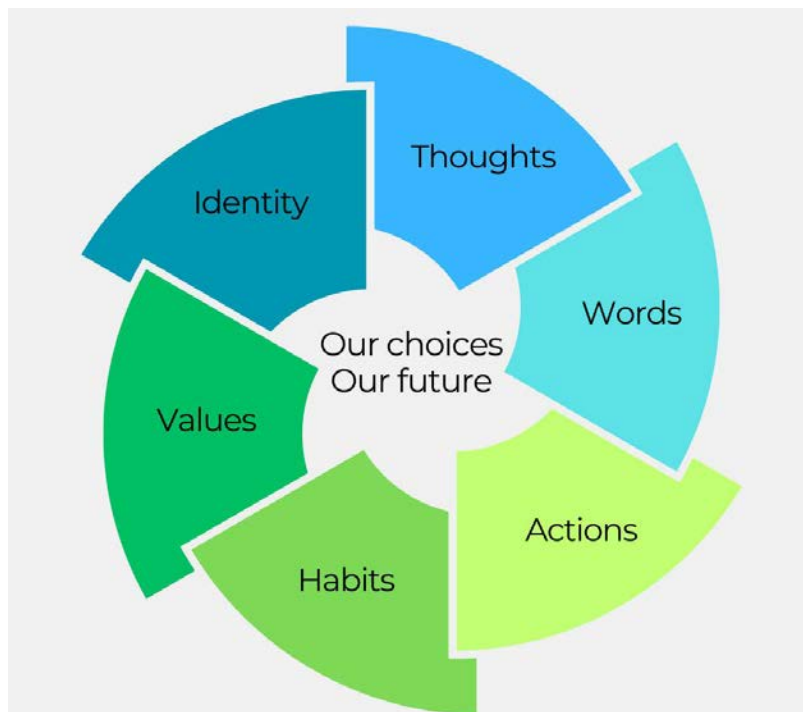


Step 1: Become a Climate Hero

In the book, *Atomic Habits*, James Clear suggests that instead of focusing only on the outcome, a good starting point is to change your belief about who you are. Don't worry—it's not too drastic. I decided that part of my new identity would be the statement "I live a sustainable, net-zero lifestyle." This statement is written in the present as if it has already happened, which prompts my brain to unconsciously work towards it. I read it often and I find it helps to reinforce my thinking and motivation.


💡	Personal action	Create a new identity
<p>Your new identity</p> <p>Write out a belief statement about your own new identity and who you want to become. You can also write it down and put it on the fridge or other places you might see it often.</p> <div data-bbox="142 856 1463 982" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>		

Creating a positive future through our choices




Step 2: Assemble your team

You can connect with your household or create a small group of friends or family to work together on reducing emissions. It's important to include these people at the beginning of the process. When discussing climate change, I believe that we should respect other people and their points of view. Consider explaining that you are concerned about the impact of climate change and that you are interested in finding out about your emissions and ways to make a positive difference. You could go through the information and concepts covered in the Introduction and Part One of the book to create a discussion and develop their support.

	Personal action	Assemble your team
Here are steps you could take to help you mobilize your team:		
	One-by-one Consider talking with people individually to see how each views climate action and find out if they are likely to support reducing emissions. Listen to what they have to say and look for areas of agreement and for shared values. You could discuss the benefits of reducing emissions and find out what they think about these issues, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protecting natural ecosystems upon which we and our children depend.• Reducing the amount of energy used, thereby lowering costs, and saving money.• Looking after the Earth, as instructed by nearly every religious faith.• Some solutions can be easy and even fun, like growing a small vegetable garden together.	
	Together If you can get a reasonable amount of support, consider having a group discussion to go through some of the personal actions in the Implementation sections for Food, Energy, Transport, Production and Consumption.	
	Review options Then look at the first steps, such as measuring your carbon footprint and setting an objective. You could also go through some of the <i>Tips to Help You Be Successful</i> .	

Step 3: Create a better vision for the future

We all have a role in imagining and building the world we want to live in. Creating a vision of the future can help drive your commitment to creating positive change. Before a positive outcome can take place, an idea must happen first, then a decision to act, followed by the action itself. After we decide on a clear vision of the future we want to create, we can turn it into reality.

	Personal action	Create a new identity		
<p>Create a vision for a better future</p> <p>This could be a group activity with your team or done individually. Close your eyes and imagine the kind of future you want to help create. Some of examples are; a stable temperature favorable to life, widespread renewable energy, zero emissions transportation, products made sustainably, while protecting ecosystems and biodiversity. Make a list of these ideas.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="147 898 1468 1081"><tr><td data-bbox="147 898 1393 1081"></td><td data-bbox="1393 898 1468 1081"></td></tr></table>				
<p>Create vision and action boards</p> <p>A vision board is a representation of ideas for the future in the previous step using pictures, words, or symbols. An action board is a representation of what can be done to make the vision a reality. You can get some inspiration for the action board by reviewing the sections in Part 3, "Implementing the Actions." This could be a group or individual activity. Use a good mix of actions which can be achieved easily or soon. Consider including a few items on the action board that are either difficult or currently out of reach but attainable in the long term. For example, I can't afford an electric car right now, but I intend to buy one as soon as I can.</p> <p>The vision and action boards don't have to include everything and can be updated by adding new items or marking completed items. Get pictures from magazines or online and include the identity statement from Step 1 or develop a team statement.</p>				
<table border="1" data-bbox="147 1591 1468 1722"><tr><td data-bbox="147 1591 1393 1722">Make or print vision and action boards and place them in a visible location. You could put them in a bedroom or communal space, like a kitchen or inside a bathroom door, or keep them on a smart phone as a wallpaper.</td><td data-bbox="1393 1591 1468 1722"></td></tr></table>			Make or print vision and action boards and place them in a visible location. You could put them in a bedroom or communal space, like a kitchen or inside a bathroom door, or keep them on a smart phone as a wallpaper.	
Make or print vision and action boards and place them in a visible location. You could put them in a bedroom or communal space, like a kitchen or inside a bathroom door, or keep them on a smart phone as a wallpaper.				

Step 4: Set your objective

Personal or household objective

A personal emissions reduction objective can be an individual or household objective. Using the SMART criteria is a helpful way to write an objective. This is described in the following table. This can be as simple as going through the actions and completing as many as you can. Alternatively, if you want to measure your emissions and then set an objective to reduce your emissions by a specific amount, go through the carbon footprinting process on page (REF??).

Specific	Write a defined end goal, with no general statements.
Measurable	Can the outcome be measured?
Assignable	Who will do it? You can collaborate and get an agreement with others.
Realistic	Is it achievable, given available resources, and is it relevant?
Time frame	When will it be started and completed?


What I did

Below is an example of the emissions reduction objective we wrote out:

Specific	Go through the actions in the book and complete as many as possible.
Measurable	Note of all the actions we complete, which do not apply, and which actions we will need to work on.
Assignable	We will work on reducing emissions together.
Realistic	The objective and timeframe are both feasible and relevant.
Timeframe	Over the next 12 months.

Personal emissions reduction objective

Write an overall emissions reduction objective which reflects your capacity, your responsibilities, and how much you want to be part of creating a positive future. Consider including all the people in your household in this process.

	Personal action	Decide on an emissions reduction objective
Specific		
Measurable		
Assignable		
Realistic		
Timeframe		

Step 5: Creating unstoppable momentum

At any point on this journey, consider connecting with people and talking about climate action. Don't be disappointed if they don't all respond positively straight away. From my own personal experience, I needed to hear about meditation a few times from several friends before I tried it. When people hear about your success, they will start to believe that they can do the same things. It promotes the idea of "If they can do it, so can I." This doesn't mean "Now I've made the change, you should, too"; instead, the message is "This is my story of how I made positive change." In your story, include any difficulties, and then how you found the solution to achieve success.

Talk to 3 people in 1 year?

Could you talk about climate action with 3 people in the next 12 months? You could start the conversation about the activities you've completed. For example, I've mentioned to friends how my father and I have made a vegetable garden, and how tasty and healthy our food is now. Also, I sometimes let friends know when I've found a new sustainable product. If you post about your successes online and a friend likes or comments about it, you could continue the conversation with them.

People you choose might be friends from school, work, or a sports team, from those involved in a hobby, or from a faith community. They could be people from the local neighborhood, your town, or across the city. It would also be good to include anyone you might know in another state, region, or even a different country. This would help connect people all over the world.

	Connect	Encourage 3 people
Start with thinking of three people to encourage and write their names down in the table below. Think about when you might be able to catch-up with them and		
Person 1		
Person 2		
Person 3		

PART 2

Implementing the Actions

"The climate we experience in the future depends on our decisions now."

IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (2021)

"We cannot live through a single day without making an impact on the world around us, and we have a choice as to what sort of difference we make."

Jane Goodall,
world-renowned anthropologist

Food



Source: luoman via iStock

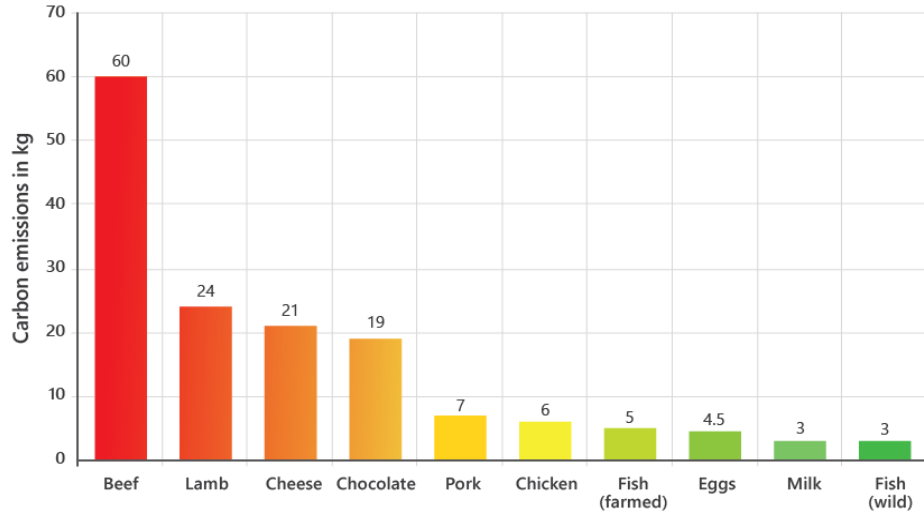
Actions – Food

Eating Food with a Lower Carbon Footprint

Not all food creates the same emissions

The graph below shows the greenhouse gas emissions created to produce 1 kilogram (2.2 lbs.) of several animal-based foods.² To produce 1 kg of beef, emissions equal to 60 kg of CO₂ are made. Emissions are higher for beef, lamb, and dairy because large amounts of methane are created by the animals' digestive processes.³

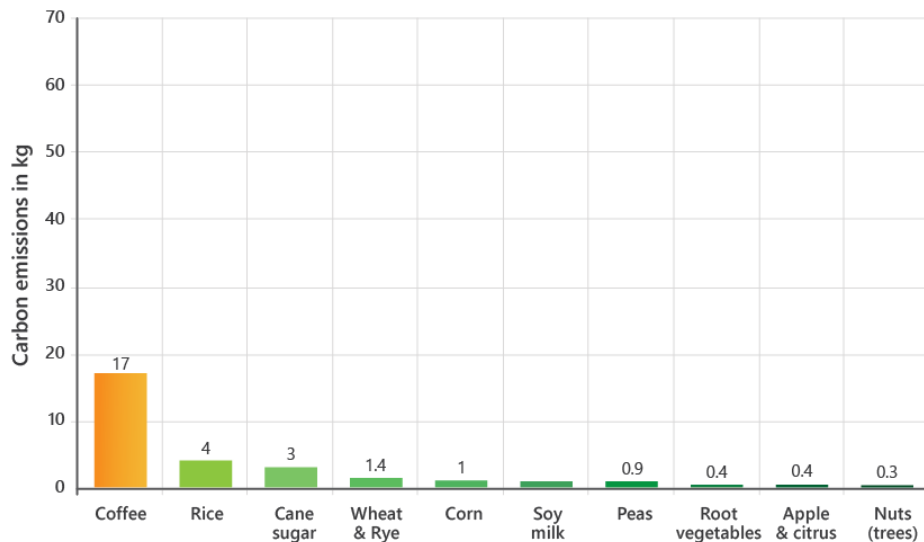
Animal-based Food Emissions Impact of 1 kg (2.2 lbs.) of Each Food Type



Source: Joseph Poore and Thomas Nemecek in *Science*, (AAAS), via Our World in Data

In 2021, the average annual beef consumption in the United States was 26 kg (58 lbs.) per person.⁴ If you multiply that by 60 kg of carbon, the result is approximately 1.5 metric tons of carbon emissions for each person in the United States for beef alone. While beef, lamb, and cheese have the highest emissions, plants mostly have the lowest impact.⁵

Fruit and Vegetable Emissions Impact of 1 kg (2.2 lbs.) of Each Food Type



Source: Joseph Poore and Thomas Nemecek in *Science* (AAAS) via Our World in Data

What are the different options to reduce emissions?

Depending on the people you ask, you'll get a wide variety of answers. Note that before you change your food lifestyle, you might consider discussing it with a doctor or dietician. (Speaking of which, I am not a doctor or a dietician, and this data is intended as information and not as medical advice.) In its *Special Report on Climate Change and Land Demand Side Mitigation*, the IPCC stated with high confidence that changing food lifestyles presents "major opportunities for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from food systems and improving health outcomes."⁶ The report reviewed several food lifestyles and how they compared with emissions reductions. Four of the main options are vegan, vegetarian, healthy diet, and Mediterranean.⁷ The IPCC compared what the reduction in global emissions could be if all people on the planet switched to these food lifestyles (see the following table).⁸ You can choose one of these to model or inform your food lifestyle, or something else altogether.

Four Food Lifestyles and Potential Annual Emissions Reductions by 2050

Food Lifestyle	Emissions Reduction	Description
Vegan	7.8 billion metric tons	Completely plant-based
Vegetarian	4.6–7.2 billion metric tons	Vegetables, fruits, grains, sugars, oils, eggs, and dairy
Healthy Diet	4.3–6.4 billion metric tons	Based on global dietary guidelines for consumption of fruits and vegetables, with reduced to low meat consumption
Mediterranean	1.2–2.3 billion metric tons	Vegetables, fruits, grains, sugars, oils, eggs, dairy, seafood, with moderate amounts of poultry, pork, lamb, and beef


Source: IPCC, *Special Report on Climate Change and Land Demand Side Mitigation*

We can save up to six billion metric tons of greenhouse gases each year by following Healthy Diet guidelines. Lists of the national guidelines for many countries are available at www.fao.org/nutrition/education/food-based-dietary-guidelines. The dietary guidelines for the United States can be found at www.MyPlate.gov. This site presents information, resources, recipes, and can tailor a personalized food plan based on age, gender, height, weight, and physical activity level: www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan. Everyone is different, so consider your own circumstances and consult with a doctor, if necessary, before making changes.

What I did

I made small adjustments, changing one meal in a week. I gradually swapped red meat for alternatives such as chicken or fish. I also started having more vegetarian meals. Over six months I reduced my red meat intake by half. I put the money I saved on less meat towards buying more fruit and vegetables. I will continue to adjust my food lifestyle to reduce my emissions even more. To make changing habits easier, review the "Tips to Help You Be Successful" section. One way to make a change is to pick the most enjoyable option. For example, I made sure new recipes were tasty and easy to make. Some farmers and farming associations are already making important progress toward low- or zero-emissions produce, and these growers should be supported by consumers and governments.

Eating Food with a Lower Carbon Footprint

 Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
<p>Talk with people</p> <p>If you share meals with other people, involve them in the meal choices, what recipes to use, the changes to make, and when they will take place.</p>				
<p>Substitute from high- to low-carbon foods</p> <p>Little adjustments, such as eating less beef, can quickly and significantly reduce your food footprint. As seen on the graph on page twelve, there are alternatives like fish, chicken, pork, or even lamb. Many other alternatives are made from vegetable protein and other products that look and taste like meat.</p>				
<p>Reducing portion size</p> <p>Reducing the amount of high-emissions food in a meal is also a step in the right direction.</p>				
<p>Half the plate</p> <p>When planning meals, aim to fill half your plate with fruit or vegetables.</p>				
<p>Planning saves time and money</p> <p>With a meal plan agreed on, you can plan what you are going to eat for the week. Deciding what recipes to use will inform the ingredients you need to purchase. Making meals tasty can support change acceptance. The MyPlate website presents more meal planning resources: www.myplate.gov/resources/print-materials.</p>				
<p>No Meat Monday – No Meat May</p> <p>One way to create a new food habit is to pick one day a week and aim for low emissions. If Monday is the first day of the working week for you, then starting change might be better on a different day, like Wednesday, for example. There is also No Meat May, a challenge from a group in Australia. They have a website with lots of resources, such as recipes, meal plans, blogs, and more: www.nomeatmay.org.</p>				

Transporting Our Food

Food can be produced locally, driven by truck over long distances, canned and shipped by sea, or picked fresh and air freighted. Each of these modes of transportation has a different amount of carbon emissions. Fresh food transported by air freight will likely have the highest emissions, in some cases 50 times higher than sea freight.⁹

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
<p>Buy in season</p> <p>One of the simplest choices around reducing our emissions is buying fresh fruit and vegetables in season.</p>				
<p>Buy local</p> <p>If there is a tag or label, find out where the fruit and vegetables come from. By buying local or regional produce, you support farmers and businesses in your community. You also help fight emissions and pollution by reducing delivery distances.</p>				

What I did

We buy fruits and vegetables in season and those grown locally or from the nearby region. We also check labels of fruits and vegetables to make sure they haven't been air freighted across long distances.

Reducing Our Individual Food Waste

Personal action	
<p>Create a food waste objective</p> <p>One of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations Programme is to halve per capita global food waste at the consumer level.¹⁰ Consider setting an objective of reducing your food waste by 50% within the next three to six months or another suitable time frame that matches your circumstances.</p>	

What I did

We started with creating the statement "We value food and don't let it go to waste" and used the following steps to gradually reduce our food waste by 80%.

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
<p>Check freshness</p> <p>Once or twice a week, go through the fridge and check meat, dairy, fruit, and vegetables for dates and freshness. Then prioritize eating food that could soon go bad. Use mature fruit and vegetables in smoothies or juices.</p>				
<p>Planning saves money</p> <p>Taking a few minutes to plan what you are going to eat for the week can make the process easier. Deciding what recipes to use will help to work out the ingredients. Check what you have on hand, then make a shopping list. Also, avoid impulse buys.</p>				
<p>Not typical is beautiful</p> <p>We can help retailers reduce food waste by buying oddly shaped fruit and vegetables.</p>				
<p>Make a date</p> <p>The date you need to know is the “use-by” date, which is the last date recommended for the use of the product.¹¹ Use this to check freshness.</p>				
<p>Store wisely</p> <p>Put new food to the rear of the shelf and push older items to the front. This applies to the refrigerator, freezer, and cupboard. Use airtight containers to keep opened food fresh in the fridge and close packets.</p>				
<p>Love your leftovers</p> <p>Leftovers can be kept for about three days in the refrigerator.¹² If you don’t think you’ll be able to eat them soon, freeze them. Leftovers can be eaten for lunch or as ingredients to make pasta sauce or stew.</p>				
<p>Odd ingredients?</p> <p>At some point you might have a few vegetables you are not sure what to do with. Ask family or friends for recipe suggestions, look online for “What can I cook with [ingredient 1] and [ingredient 2]?”, or use a recipe app.</p>				

Production and Consumption



Source: Billy Clouse on Unsplash

Actions – Production and Consumption

Product marketing often tells us we must have more, and that the newest shiny product is the key to becoming noticed and popular. The thing about a lie is that when we stop believing it, the fog lifts, and we can clearly see the real world around us. The head of sustainability at IKEA noted, "In the west, we have probably hit peak stuff. We talk about peak oil. I'd say we've hit peak red meat, peak sugar, peak stuff."¹³

Support a sustainable circular economy

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
<p>Reduce</p> <p>The first step is to reject unnecessary consumerism. Consider what you purchase and consume what you need. To find the ecological footprint of your country, open the following link. If the ecological footprint of your country is greater than "1," consider reducing your consumption unless you already purchase at a low level: www.overshootday.org/how-many-earths-or-countries-do-we-need/</p>				
<p>Refuse</p> <p>Take your own reusable shopping bag and refuse plastic bags. Stop using single use plastics such as straws, plates, containers, and cutlery. Demand renewable options from shops and take-out food outlets.</p>				
<p>Reuse</p> <p>Buying products second-hand gives them a new life. Sell or give away your unwanted items to family, friends, or charity instead of throwing them out.</p>				
<p>Repair and refurbish</p> <p>Many electrical items can be repaired, clothes can be mended, and furniture can be reupholstered. If you are not sure, ask your family or a friend, or search online.</p>				
<p>Recycle</p> <p>Buy products which have a recycle symbol on their packaging. Ensure that you recycle every item you can. Ask your local government or recycling center about which items they will take.</p>				

Plastic problems

Global emissions from the plastic lifecycle in 2015 were 1.7 billion metric tons of CO₂ equivalent. This is expected to grow to 6.5 billion metric tons annually by 2050 under business as usual.¹⁴

What I did

I take my own bags shopping and have stopped using plastic bags. I have a reusable coffee cup and use my own water bottle. I say “no” to plastic utensils. I traded my plastic toothbrush for bamboo (you need to wipe them dry after use). And I have cut out many other single-use plastics. If we choose to use less plastic, then we can significantly reduce emissions and pollution. Below are some common products that use plastic along with their alternatives.

Common Plastic Products, Decomposition Times, and Alternatives

Item	Description	Decomposition	Alternatives
	Plastic bag	10–20 years	Take your own bags shopping
	Polyester wet wipes	50–100 years	Cotton or hemp wet wipes
	Styrofoam	50–100 years	Use a reusable coffee cup
	Plastic straw	50–450 years	Take your own metal straw, or don't use one
	Plastic bottles	50–450 years	Try carrying a reusable bottle
	Plastic toothbrush	450–500 years	Bamboo toothbrush
	Plastic diaper	450–600 years	Consider compostable diapers
	Plastic utensils	1,000 years	Use your own utensils or ask for renewable options

Source: US National Park Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and National Geographic

From the Author

If you have bought a copy of *Creating a Better Climate Future*, I would be very grateful if you could take a few minutes to write a short review. By sharing your thoughts, it may also assist other people decide if it might be useful to them. You can use whatever platform you prefer. To write a quick review on Amazon, login and either:

1. Go to the top and click “Returns and Orders”, then scroll to find the book, and click on the button “Write a product review”, or
2. Search for the name of the book and scroll down and look on the left, past the “Customer Reviews” until you see “Review this Product” and click on the button “Write a product review”.

Your review will be very helpful, and I am interested to hear what you think.

Thank you,
Philip

How to reduce emissions from consumption

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
<p>Demand renewable options to replace plastic</p> <p>Buy and demand products with sustainable non-plastic packaging. Several types of renewable packaging are being made. One option is packaging made from waste sugar, cane pulp, and bamboo.¹⁵</p>				
<p>Switch away from high emissions and unsustainable products</p> <p>Find out if the paper and wood you use are sustainably sourced. Or do they contribute to deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions? Common items such as toilet paper, tissues, and paper can all be made from recycled materials or from materials harvested from sustainable plantations. Look for symbols to show 100% recycled or plantation-sourced products. You can search online for "Eco-friendly [product type] in [country/region]," for example, "Eco-friendly toilet paper in America."</p>				
<p>Net-zero carbon brands and companies</p> <p>Look for brands and organizations that are making changes now to reduce their emissions and switch to their products and services if suitable. Watch out for companies that are promising but not changing right now.</p>				
<p>Building or renovating</p> <p>If you are going to build or renovate a home, ask the architect or builder if they can source low-emissions materials and forest-friendly timber.</p>				
<p>Net-zero or low carbon emission events</p> <p>If you're organizing a birthday party or wedding, think about ways to reduce emissions. This could include food choices, non-plastic items, and energy use.</p>				

Energy



Actions – Energy

We have many options for reducing energy use, so I've organized them into several areas. If your country has a 100% renewable energy grid, then you don't have to reduce your energy use. However, for people living in countries that are transitioning, we should try to find opportunities to make a difference every time we use energy.

Getting the right numbers

To compare the cost of switching to a renewable energy provider or get a quote to install solar panels, it will help to know how much energy you are using. One way to do this for electricity and gas is to check the bills. Electricity is measured in kilowatt hours (kWh), while natural gas (methane) is often measured in British thermal units (BTU), in megajoules (MJ), or in units of 100 cubic feet (Ccf) in the United States.¹⁶ Obtain the average daily usage for each month. Some providers have an online or mobile app to provide this information, or you can also use an energy monitor.

Review energy use, options, and plans

Several ways are available to reduce or eliminate energy emissions. If you rent, please skip to the next section, "Switching to Renewable Energy." If you own a home, then installing solar is one option to consider.

Installing solar

You might have the opportunity to install solar panels, which will provide energy during the day. You can also add a storage battery, which will supply energy at night. Another option is to buy renewable energy for the times when the panels are not generating power (this is covered in the next section).

Government subsidies or other incentives might be offered in your area. Check to see if the incentives apply to the purchase or financing of equipment. This can be done online by searching for "home solar incentives in [your location]" or by asking a local installer. The following is a process for reviewing and selecting a solar installer:

1. Look at independent reviews of solar installers and pick the top three.
2. Look at their company website and see if they seem professional. Make sure they operate in your area, check for ways to communicate with them, and check their warranty, servicing, and purchase or lease options.
3. Get quotes from two good operators who are licensed and consider that the cheapest option is not always the best.
4. They should also provide an estimated amount of savings each year. If this is divided by the total installation amount, it should be possible to find out how many years it will take to pay off the system.

To get specific information on what the options are available, search online for "How does home solar work in [your location]?" The US Energy Department has a good explanation on their website: www.energy.gov/eere/solar/homeowners-guide-going-solar. They also have a detailed planning guide for implementing solar power systems.

Switching to renewable

Before I started buying renewable energy I completed the energy-saving tips in the next few sections. After saving some money on my monthly bills, I then switched to renewable energy. This is the process I followed for reviewing renewable energy providers:

1. Look at independent reviews of the best renewable energy providers and pick the top three. Search online for "reviews of renewable energy providers in [your location]."
2. Look at their company website and see if they look professional. Make sure they operate in your area, check for ways to communicate with them, and look at their renewable energy options.
3. Get quotes from the best two.

If switching to renewable energy is currently too difficult financially, then see how the energy saving tips go first. We will also look at options for offsetting emissions in the review section.

Review Options and Create a Switch Plan

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
Switch away from gas If possible, switch away from natural gas for heating and cooking.				
Information Gather information on the different options for installing solar panels or using renewable energy.				
Choose a renewable option Option A: Install solar panels and battery. Option B: Install solar panels and use renewable energy when dark. Option C: Use renewable energy. Option D: Offset emissions.				
Planning Write out the steps to make this happen.				
Track progress If the implementation is complicated, such as installing solar panels, keep track of your progress.				

Reduce emissions in the home

Heating and cooling are estimated to make up 44% of energy use in the home in the United States (2020).¹⁷ Reducing energy use will not only reduce emissions, but in many cases will save money as well.

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
Smaller one-off tasks				
Try turning the water heater down a quarter. If you don't notice the difference, try turning it down again until you find the right level.				
In the bathroom, install a water-efficient showerhead.				
Reduce gaps under doors and around windows and skylights. Use block-out blinds, curtains, or window insulation film.				
Consider a smart thermostat, which can help fine-tune energy use.				
Healthy planet habits				
Try turning down the heating a little in winter (21°C/70°F). In summer, use fans before the air conditioner and adjust the setting slightly higher in summer (25°C/75°F); this can save around 10%. ¹⁸				
Only heat or cool rooms in use, and close doors and central heating ducts to rooms not in use. Use windows when the temperature changes instead of relying on heating and cooling.				
If you are going away, think about turning the water heater down.				
Bigger one-off tasks				
Insulation can make a big difference in saving money on heating or cooling your home and reducing emissions. Prioritize the roof.				
When purchasing a water or space heater, consider buying electric. These are also safer than kerosene and gas heaters. ¹⁹				

What I did

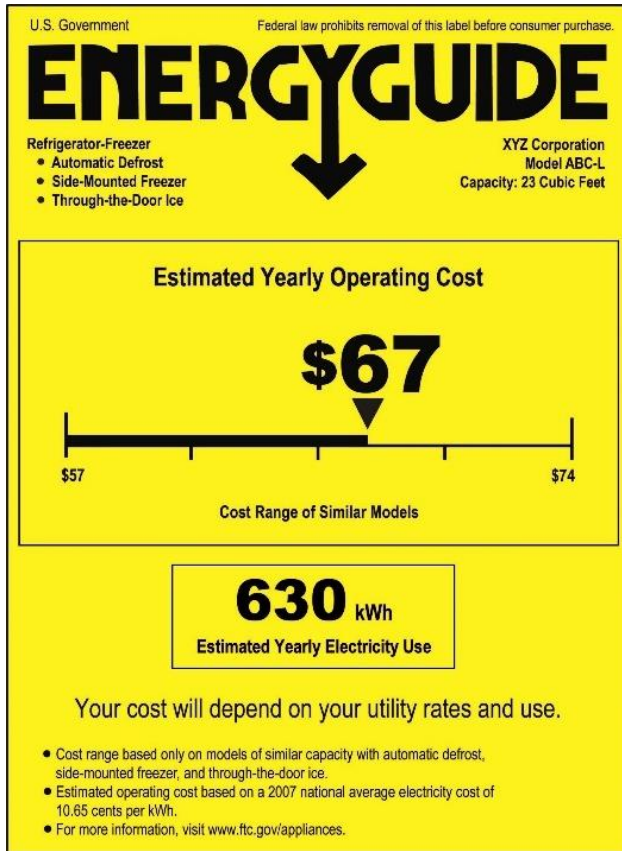
My father and I looked at the alternatives for solar and battery systems. We reviewed different installers and saw a sizeable difference in price. I wasn't sure how important quality was, so I rang a friend who runs a solar installation company that specializes in large systems for business. He told me that about 10% of his business was removing cheap solar installations that had failed. He suggested using a company that had been around for at least a few years, so that if anything went wrong in the future, they would still be around to fix it. We looked at two companies, one of which had been a major electrical component wholesaler for more than 30 years. The quotes we received only had a pay-up-front option, which was not affordable for us at the time. We will continue to try to find more options for solar installation. We also continue to work on many changes that are listed in the following table.

Reduce emissions from other areas

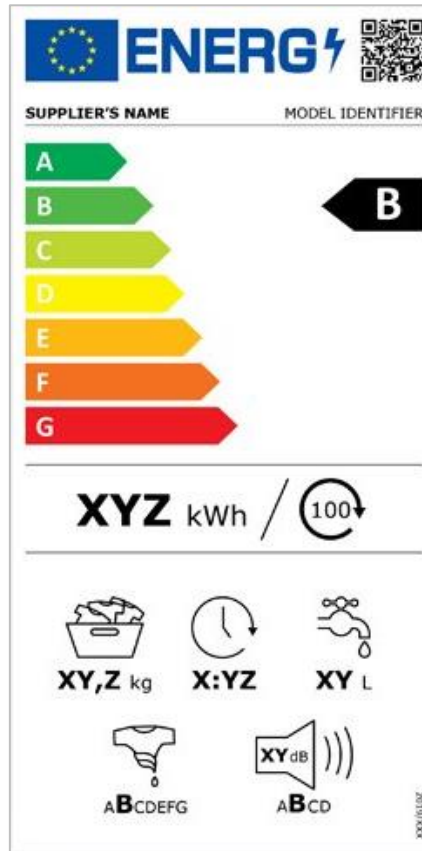
Some appliances use a lot of energy when in standby mode; this can account for up to 10% of residential energy.²⁰

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
Smaller one-off tasks				
Install energy-efficient light bulbs, such as LEDs. You can see the difference that choice of light bulb makes from the table on the next page.				
When not using an appliance, turn it off. The worst offenders are TV, recorder/players, game consoles, cable boxes, stereos, computers, screens, laptops, and printers. As often as you can, turn them off at the power socket or plug them into a power strip and then turn the power strip off when not in use.				
Another alternative is a smart plug, which can be programmed to turn on or off at specific times.				
Unplug rechargers for phones, laptops, tablets, or turn off at the switch when not in use.				
Turn off lights in rooms not in use.				
Don't leave a laptop or computer running when not in use. Some computer parts will last longer if they are used less.				
Bigger one-off tasks				
If you have a pool, consider using a cover to keep the heat in and install an efficient filter pump; also consider solar for heating.				

Energy Rating Label from the United States







Energy Rating Labels from Europe



Source: US Federal Trade Commission and the European Commission

Light Bulb Comparisons

Evolution of the Light Bulb				
	Incandescent	Halogen	Compact Fluorescent (CFL)	Light Emitting Diode (LED)
Year Developed	1879	1959	1976	1994
Energy Needed for 250 Lumens	25W	18W	6W	4W
Energy Lost to Heat	90%	80%	50%	10%
Average Life Span	1,000 hours	2,000 hours	10,000 hours	25,000 hours

Source: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)²¹ ; Images: Den Potisev on iStock

Transportation



Source: Bithin Raj on Unsplash

Actions – Transportation

Vehicle usage (motorbike, car, SUV, or van)

I would like to buy an electric vehicle, but I can't afford one now. However, I plan to make my next car purchase an electric one. I found I could make many changes to the way I use transportation to reduce emissions. The following tips are mainly for old technology internal combustion engines, but many can also help with zero- or low-emissions vehicles to reduce energy use and increase range.

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
Smaller one-off tasks				
Reduce weight by removing unnecessary items from the car.				
Remove accessories that increase wind resistance, like roof racks, when not in use, as they can decrease miles per gallon (about 17% for fuel cars). ²²				
Healthy planet habits				
Regularly check tire pressure. Properly inflated tires last longer and increase miles per gallon.				
Keep the temperature setting at the lowest for heating and highest for cooling that will make you comfortable. Parking in the shade on a hot day can help to reduce the amount of cooling needed.				
Aggressive driving—speeding, rapid acceleration, and braking—can lower mileage (for fuel cars by about 10% to 40% in traffic). ²³				
Mileage improves by observing the speed limit, so try cruise control on freeways, if you have it, to save about 7% to 14% for fuel-based cars. ²⁴				
For fuel cars, use the recommended oil for that vehicle and keep it serviced and tuned regularly.				
Bigger one-off tasks				
When buying a vehicle, consider an electric or hybrid. If you can't afford one, then think about a car with a more efficient engine. Information on fuel efficiency is available at www.fueleconomy.gov .				

Travel less or change the way you travel

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
<p>Less travel</p> <p>Try making fewer trips through planning. One way could be to plan shopping more efficiently, to go less often, or to combine shopping for several things in one trip.</p>				
<p>People power</p> <p>When not going long distances, look at walking, using a scooter, or riding a bike. The American Heart Association advises that being more active can lower the risk of heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, dementia, Alzheimer's, and several types of cancer.²⁵</p>				
<p>Holidays</p> <p>If you plan a holiday, consider traveling inside your own country or local region and look at lower-emissions options.</p>				
<p>Commuting to work</p> <p>While many people don't have the option to work from home, it might be possible for some people. For those whose job does not require them to be at the workplace, this possibility could be discussed with a supervisor. It might not be possible to work all days from home, but maybe one or two per week. If you drive to work, to avoid the peak rush times, start early and finish early (or start late and finish late). This might reduce the time you spend in traffic, reduce emissions, and save money.</p>				
<p>Public transportation</p> <p>See if you can use public transportation more often. If there are not enough public transportation options in the local area, then consider adding this to the list of things to ask your local or state politicians. While adding train or tram infrastructure might be expensive, electric buses are becoming more available.</p>				

PART 3

Reviewing and Updating the Plan

“Every bit of warming matters,
every year matters,
every choice matters.”

IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C

Review Progress

Refresh the process

Now that we have gone through the process of reducing emissions, we will consider reviewing progress, offsetting, and achieving net-zero. The following is a quick refresh of the process based on *Climate Neutral* by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)²⁶:

- 1. Plan:** Find out the amount of your emissions and create objectives.
- 2. Reduce:** Make personal emissions reductions.
- 3. Review:** Measure the remaining emissions.
- 4. Offset:** When emissions are unavoidable, offsets are activities that balance emissions by reducing or removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.²⁷
- 5. Net-zero:** Achieve a state of net-zero emissions when human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are balanced by removals over a specified time.²⁸



The process of reducing emissions

It is important to recommit to the objective of stopping greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible. Offsetting should only be used as a temporary measure for unavoidable emissions. It should not be used as an excuse to delay action in reducing emissions for individuals, businesses, or governments.

Review: Carbon Footprinting

Having gone through the process of reducing emissions in the different areas, it's time to review your progress. This means conducting another carbon footprint assessment for your household to see what emissions are left. Some of the reasons there might be emissions left over:

- In many cases, no zero-emissions product or service options exist.
- No labeling or information is offered on the level of emissions created by products or services.
- Some changes take time, such as installing solar panels.
- It might be difficult to afford low- or zero-emissions alternatives.

After finding what emissions remain, we will look at carbon offsets and how they work. I've included instructions for carbon footprinting in the next pages. One calculator is designed for residents in the United States, as provided by The Nature Conservancy. The other calculator has an international approach and is provided by an Australian organization called Trace.

United States – The Nature Conservatory

Go to the link: www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/carbon-footprint-calculator/

1. Get Started: Select a city or zip code in the United States, how many people live in the house, and the total annual income, then click "Next".

2. Travel by Vehicle: You can choose diesel or gasoline on the left, then enter the total number of miles travelled per year. To find this, you can use an online road trip app to determine the distance of each of the regular trips you make in a week and add them up, then multiply by 52. Miles per gallon is the distance, measured in miles, that a car can travel per gallon of fuel. You can use the average default of 22 miles per gallon. Or to find the miles per gallon for your car or motorbike search online: "[your car's make] [model] [year] mpg" (for example: "Ford Fiesta 2020 mpg"). If you have only one car you can enter zero for the next one, or if you have more than two cars you can use the "+add" at the top to add more vehicles.

3. Public Transport and Air Travel: Select the "Advanced" options to add more information and get a more accurate estimate. Set the modes of transportation that you do not use to zero.

4. Home: Work out from your energy bills how much to enter for electricity or natural gas or use the estimates provided. To work out the size of your living space in square feet, you can enter it if you know, or work out the area of each room by multiplying the length and width of each room and then adding them up. Another alternative is to use the average size of a single family detached home (2,200 sq.ft.), a two-bedroom apartment (1,000 sq.ft.), a single-bedroom apartment (710 sq.ft.), or a studio (470 sq.ft.)²⁹

5. Food: Click "Advanced" to enter more information and use the average values or adjust them where appropriate using the sliders.


6. Shopping: Click "Advanced" to enter more information and use the average values or enter figures which are more accurate.

Record your results

You can click on the bar chart icon to make it appear. Then click on each bar to find out the value and enter each in the table below and the total footprint. If you entered your footprint information at the beginning, then add these final entries on the right. If this is the first time you calculated your footprint, put them in the left column.

Emissions at the beginning		Emissions at the end	
Travel		Travel	
Home		Home	
Food		Food	
Goods		Goods	
Services		Services	
Total Footprint (tons CO ₂ /year)		Total Footprint (tons CO ₂ /year)	

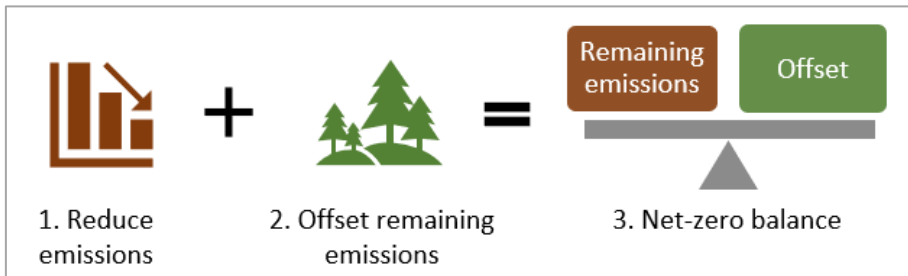
Feel free to use another carbon footprint calculator. Other options are provided by 8 Billion Trees www.8billiontrees.com/carbon-calculator/ and the Global Footprint Network www.footprintcalculator.org.

	Personal action	OPTION 2 – INTERNATIONAL	
International – Trace			
Go to the link: www.our-trace.com/tools/carbon-footprint-calculator			
<p>1. Your Home: Select country and currency (USD=United States, GBP=Great Britain, EUR=Euro, NZD=New Zealand, AUD=Australia). If your country is not on the list pick the closest one or select other and use USD. Then click "2".</p> <p>2. Your Home: Fill out each question then click "Next"</p> <p>3. Food and Waste: Fill out each question then click "Next"</p> <p>4. Travel by Vehicle: For transport by motorbike or car you need to estimate how far you travel each week. You can use an online road trip app to find out the distance of each of the regular trips you make in a week and total them.</p> <p>4. Travel by Public Transport or Flying: For public transport you can use an online trip app to find out the distance of each of the regular trips you make in a week and add them up. For the flights, you can make a list of the trips you've taken and then go online to find out how many hours each flight is. You could search "How long to fly from [departure point] to [destination]."</p> <p>At the end, you are asked to enter a name and email. Regardless of what you enter, the results will still be shown on the next screen. Trace is an Australian organization, and the results page includes a native animal such as a kangaroo or wombat. You can ignore this and simply collect the results.</p>			
Record your results			
If you entered your footprint information at the beginning, then add these final entries on the right. If this is the first time you calculated your footprint, put them in the left column. Enter the percentages for each of the different areas and then the total amount in metric tons at the bottom.			
Emissions at the beginning		Emissions at the end	
Household		Household	
Food & Waste		Food & Waste	
Ground Travel		Ground Travel	
Air Travel		Air Travel	
Good & Services		Good & Services	
Total Footprint (metric tons CO2/year)		Total Footprint (metric tons CO2/year)	

Offsetting and Achieving Net-Zero

The IPCC defines net-zero as a point when human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are balanced by human-caused removals over a specified time.³⁰ One way to balance emissions is to financially support projects which reduce or remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. This can be done by buying carbon credits. One carbon credit represents the certified removal of one metric ton of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.³¹ Ten metric tons of remaining emissions could be balanced with ten credits.

Carbon Offsets: A Temporary Process



Source: British Standards Institution (BSI)³²

Opportunities are available to support projects that reduce emissions and to help communities in developing countries on the front lines of climate change. Some examples include:

- Replanting forests with a biodiverse range of trees and native vegetation while supporting local and indigenous communities.
- Supporting developing countries to create renewable energy, which often means reducing the demand for fossil fuels or providing electricity to people for the first time.
- Many people in developing countries don't have access to energy for cooking and rely on burning wood in fireplaces. Some projects provide stoves that are 50% more efficient. This means fewer emissions, less stress on nearby forests, and less pollution in the home.

You can choose from many other types of projects.

What I did

I saved money by reducing my car usage, and we have also saved on our food, energy, and consumption. We put enough of the savings to pay for carbon credits to offset our remaining emissions. I found many types of organizations offering carbon offsets online. Some projects have been criticized for not achieving what they promised, so I looked for projects that are certified by an internationally recognized organization. This certification confirms that each carbon credit represents one metric ton of carbon dioxide removal. Two of the main certification organizations are Gold Standard and the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) by Verra. It was also important to us that the projects aligned with our values by supporting developing countries and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. After reviewing several projects, we found the credits can cost from US\$11 per metric ton up to US\$45. Therefore, if you have ten metric tons to offset, this could cost between US\$110 to US\$450, depending on the projects you choose. We bought several credits from a few different projects that helped renewable energy development, reforestation, and efficient cookstoves in developing countries. These were certified by either Gold Standard or Verra.

Personal action				
Description of the Action	What An action summary	Who will do it	When to do it	Status completed
Emissions Identify the amount of the remaining emissions determined by using the carbon footprint calculator.				
Review and select offset projects Review various offset projects, taking into consideration your financial circumstances and values. Gold Standard and South Pole are two well-known organizations that offer certified carbon credits. Their information is listed below. Consider involving other people in your household in the final decision on which projects to choose.				
Purchase offsets Ensure that the purchase of carbon offsets will not cause financial hardship to the household, then purchase offsets.				

There are many carbon offset programs in place around the world. If you are interested in using other options, search online for “certified carbon offsets in [country name]” for one that suits your region or personal objectives.

Gold Standard

In addition to maintaining an international standard for carbon offsets, this organization has a carbon credit marketplace with a range of carbon removal and emissions reductions projects. These also support the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

How it works: www.goldstandard.org

Projects to choose from: marketplace.goldstandard.org/collections/projects

South Pole

The projects at South Pole are certified by Verra or Gold Standard and have many options that are aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

How it works: www.southpole.com/carbon-offsets-explained

Projects to choose from: shop.southpole.com


Update the Plan

The next step is to update the original plan and then keep the process going.

Update objectives

In our household, we can still improve several things. So, we will set a new objective at the beginning of next year. We will update our objective and put it into the SMART criteria format below.

Specific	Go through the actions and complete as many as possible, or reduce emissions by [new target] % from the level of last year. Then offset the remaining emissions to achieve net zero.
Measurable	Calculate emissions at the end and review progress.
Assignable	Work on reducing emissions together as a household.
Realistic	The objective and time frame are both feasible.
Time frame	1 January to 31 December of each year

	Personal action	Decide on an emissions reduction objective	
Specific			
Measurable			
Assignable			
Realistic			
Timeframe			

Update plan

With a new objective, the next thing to do is plan additional actions and future progress. The benefit of calculating a carbon footprint is that we now have information on the remaining emissions to help us decide where to act. Update your plan by looking at your carbon footprint and targeting areas of highest emissions. In addition, review the checklists to identify actions that require additional attention and have the best opportunity for further reductions.

Conclusion



From the Author

One of the main things I have learned is that reducing emissions and encouraging others to make positive change may take some time, and things may not always work out on the first try. Sometimes, when working on a long-term objective, setbacks and obstacles can get in the way. However, I look at these as temporary and make an effort to keep going forward. If we never give up, then we can't fail.

As you progress, I wish you well. I hope you will reduce emissions, encourage those around you, and influence others to act now. I also hope that you will feel more hopeful and confident about your future and life on Earth.

I strongly believe that as more people take action every day, it will create an overwhelming tide of change, making the world a better place and protecting our beautiful home.

Best wishes,

Philip Kent-Hughes

Keep updated about actions at www.climate-action.org.

End Notes

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