



9 things you can do about climate change

As experts on climate change, many people ask us, what can I do personally about it? And how does this fit into the bigger picture?

We spoke to our scientists and drew up a list of the most achievable ways you personally can make a difference. While individuals alone may not be able to make drastic emissions cuts that limit climate change to acceptable levels, personal action is essential to raise the importance of issues to policymakers and businesses.

Using your voice as a consumer, a customer, a member of the electorate and an active citizen, will lead to changes on a much grander scale.

"Use your voice, use your vote, use your choice" - Al Gore

This guide was produced by the [Grantham Institute – Climate Change and the Environment](https://imperial.ac.uk/grantham), an institute of Imperial College London.

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1. Make your voice heard by those in power



Tell your Member of Parliament, local councillors and city mayors that you think action on climate change is important.

A prosperous future for the United Kingdom depends on their decisions about the environment, green spaces, roads, cycling infrastructure, waste and recycling, air quality and energy efficient homes. Ultimately, steps to reduce carbon emissions will have a positive impact on other local issues, like improving air quality and public health, creating jobs and reducing inequality.

[This briefing paper - and the animation below - highlights the co-benefits of climate action,](#) and why it is particularly relevant for decision-makers in cities and devolved regions. Share it with your local MP.

Find out [who your MP is,](#) and the [best way to contact them.](#)

Join a social movement or campaign that focuses on environmental activities or gets everyone talking about climate change action, such as the [Youth Strike 4 Climate](#) or [Extinction Rebellion.](#)

2. Eat less meat and dairy



Avoiding meat and dairy products is one of the biggest ways to reduce your environmental impact on the planet.

[Eat fewer or smaller portions of meat](#), especially red meat, which has the largest environmental impact, and reduce dairy products or switch them for non-dairy alternatives.

Try to choose fresh, seasonal produce that is grown locally to help reduce the carbon emissions from transportation, preservation and prolonged refrigeration.

Studies suggest that a [high-fibre, plant-based diet is also better for your health](#) - so it can be a win-win.

- Check out our [blog on going vegan for top tips on making it a success](#).
- And have you thought about eating insects? They are a healthy and environmentally friendly food source, so why don't we eat them? Researchers at Imperial have been [investigating how people in the Western world can be convinced to eat them](#).

For more details on how eating a more plant-based, seasonal diet can help tackle climate change, support the local economy and help us to live healthier lives, check out our blog: [Saving the planet, one meal at a time](#)

3. Cut back on flying



If you need to fly for work, consider using [video-conferencing](#) instead. For trips in the same country or continent, take the train or explore options using an electric car.

For leisure trips, choose nearby destinations, and fly economy - on average, [a passenger in business class has a carbon footprint three times higher than someone in economy](#).

When flying is unavoidable, pay a little extra for carbon offsetting.

- There are a [variety of reputable schemes](#) that fund sustainable development projects or natural solutions like planting trees.
- [Myclimate](#) also compares the carbon emissions of your particular flight, with the maximum amount of carbon dioxide a person should produce per year in order to halt climate change, and the average amount an EU citizen produces each year. It makes for sobering reading.

*Transport has become the largest emitting sector of the UK economy, accounting for **28% of UK greenhouse gas emissions in 2017**.*

4. Leave the car at home



Instead of getting in the car, walk or cycle – and enjoy the [physical and mental health benefits](#), and the money saved.

For longer journeys, use public transport, or try [car sharing schemes](#).

Not only do cars contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, but air pollution caused by exhaust fumes from traffic poses a serious threat to public health. It has been shown to affect the [health of unborn babies](#) and [increase the risk of dementia](#).

Furthermore, Imperial research shows that [poor air quality in the capital leads to around 1,000 London hospital admissions](#) for asthma and serious lung conditions every year, and that [air pollution in the US is associated with 30,000 deaths and reduced life expectancy](#).

If driving is unavoidable, investigate [trading in your diesel or petrol car for an electric or hybrid model](#). Alternatively, if you only need one for a short time, there are some [all-electric car hire companies](#).

When behind the wheel, think about the way you drive:

- Switch off the engine when you park up
- Drive smoothly
- Make sure the tyres are fully pumped, and that the [oxygen sensors](#) are in good order - this can improve the cars fuel mileage and efficiency by up to [3% and 40% respectively](#)

5. Reduce your energy use, and bills



Small [changes to your behaviour at home](#) will help you use less energy, cutting your carbon footprint and your energy bills.

- Put on an extra layer and turn down the heating a degree or two
- Turn off lights and appliances when you don't need them
- Replace light bulbs with LEDs
- Make [simple changes to how you use hot water](#), like buying a water-efficient shower head.

Make sure [your home is energy efficient](#). Check the building has proper insulation, and consider [draught-proofing](#) windows and doors. If you are in rented accommodation, lobby your landlord to make sure the property is energy efficient.

[Switching energy supply to a green tariff](#) is a great way to invest in renewable energy sources – and could save you money on bills too.

6. Respect and protect green spaces



Green spaces, such as parks and gardens, are important. They absorb carbon dioxide and are associated with lower levels of air pollution.

They help to regulate temperature by [cooling overheated urban areas](#), can reduce flood risk by absorbing surface rainwater and can provide [important habitats for a wide variety of insects, animals, birds and amphibians](#).

They also [provide multiple benefits to public health](#), with studies linking green space to reduced levels of stress.

Find out more about the benefits of integrating nature into urban spaces in our briefing: [Integrating green and blue spaces into our cities: Making it happen](#)

Plant trees. [The Woodland Trust](#) are aiming to plant 64 million trees over the next 10 years – and need your help. Whether you want to plant a single tree in your garden, or a whole wood, they have tools and resources to help.

Create your own green space. Add pot plants to your window sill or balcony, and if you have your own outdoor space, don't replace the grass with paving or artificial turf.

Help to protect and conserve green spaces like local parks, ponds or community gardens. Organisations like [Fields In Trust](#) and the [National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces](#) have advice on resources on how you can get involved in areas local to you.

Check out [TCV](#). If you don't have direct access to open spaces, this community volunteering charity brings people together to connect to nature, and create healthier and happier communities.

7. Invest your money wisely



Find out where your money goes. Voice your concerns about responsible investment by writing to your bank or pension provider, and [ask if you can opt out of funds investing in fossil fuels](#).

There are also a [number of 'ethical banks'](#) you can investigate.

Banks, pensions funds and big corporates often hold investments in fossil fuel companies. However, [the discussion around responsible investment](#) – weighing up environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors and taking them into consideration when investing money – is growing.

8. Cut consumption – and waste



Everything we use as consumers has a carbon footprint.

- Avoid single-use items and fast fashion, and try not to buy more than you need
- Shop around for quality items that last a long time
- Put your purchasing power to good use by choosing brands that align with your new green aspirations.

Try to minimise waste.

- Repair and reuse
- Give unwanted items a new life by donating them to charity
- Avoid wasting food
- Let brands know if you think they are [using too much packaging](#) - some will take customer feedback seriously

9. Talk about the changes you make



Conversations are a great way to spread big ideas.

As you make these positive changes to reduce your environmental impact, share your experience with your family, friends, customers and clients. Don't be a bore or confrontational. Instead, talk positively, and be honest about the ups and downs.

For some tips on successful climate-based conversations, check out [Climate Outreach's work with climate scientist and communicator Katherine Hayhoe](#).

For more on how we can achieve a cleaner, greener, fairer future, visit

www.imperial.ac.uk/grantham

We will be publishing more details on our tips to help people do things about climate change over the next few weeks. [Sign up to our mailing list](#) to receive a weekly update of news, opinions and events from the climate change and environment community at Imperial College London.

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