Reducing Your Carbon Footprint

Each year, every person in the United States adds about 40,000 pounds of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere.

Suppose you wish to reduce your carbon footprint by 10% — you need to make changes to eliminate 4,000 pounds of carbon dioxide. Where do you start?

The following activities or products each contribute about 1 pound of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. So, think: What changes would you make?

**One pound of carbon dioxide corresponds to:**

**Electricity:** One pound of carbon dioxide corresponds to approximately 1 kW-hr of electricity, enough for:
- 300 days of smartphone use (streaming video on iPhone SE)
- 100 hours of laptop use (low power MacBook air)
- 10 hours of TV use (HDTV)
- 15 minutes of electric clothes dryer use

**Travel:** One pound of carbon dioxide will get you:
- 3 miles on a commuter train (per passenger)
- 2.5 miles in a battery-powered electric vehicle (driving solo)
- 2 miles on an airplane (per passenger, fully loaded plane)
- 1.5 miles on a public bus (per passenger)
- 1 mile in a gasoline-powered car (driving solo)

**Heating and cooling:** One pound of carbon dioxide buys you:
- 13 hours of running a 20” box fan
- 40 minutes of heating with a 1500W space heater
- 15 minutes of air conditioning
- 6 minutes of heating with a gas forced-air furnace
- 2 minutes of a hot shower

**Food and beverages:** It takes one pound of carbon dioxide to produce and deliver to you:
- 1.5 pounds of domestic corn (production only)
- 1 pound of dry beans
- 1 pound of domestic wheat (production only)
- 100 local apples, or 10 domestic apples, or 1 imported apple
- 5 bottles of water (500 mL disposable PET bottles)
- 1.5 L of soda in an aluminum can
  - if the can is made of recycled aluminum, you get 5 L of soda per pound of CO₂
• 0.8 L of soda in a glass bottle
  • recycling 3 pounds of glass saves a pound of CO₂
• 1 pint (0.5 L) of milk
• 1/2 oz. of beef

Consumer goods: Producing and delivering clothing and other goods costs energy, which means carbon in the atmosphere. One pound of carbon dioxide gets you:

• 1/25 of a pair of flip-flops
• 1/45 of a pair of blue jeans
• 1/50 of a lightweight jacket or shirt
• 1/100 of a pair of boots