

## 101 Ways to reduce your carbon footprint and help your community become more resilient



The Earth's climate is warming, which creates numerous challenges for communities to adapt to, including sea level rise, extreme weather events, and impacts to the environment, human health, and agriculture. Burning of fossil fuels for electricity production, for commercial and residential buildings, and for transportation, are primary sources contributing to climate change in the United States.<sup>1</sup> ***However, you and I can do something about the problem.*** By reducing our "carbon footprint," or greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), the rate of climate change will slow, which will lessen the impacts.

***What can you do?*** There are a multitude of ways to reduce your carbon footprint and help your community adapt to climate change. While this is certainly not an exhaustive list, here are 101 ways in which you can help. **Start with just a few changes or actions in your personal life, at work, to your home, and for your community.** Individual actions add up in a big way, which will create a better world for everyone!

### PERSONAL CHANGES TO LESSEN YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT:

1. Reduce what you buy
2. Reuse items that can be used again
3. Repair items, if possible
4. Recycle items that are recyclable
5. Borrow or exchange items with friends, instead of buying – such as tools, lawn equipment, sewing machines, or other items that are not needed daily
6. Invest in companies committed to green practices

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/sources-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

7. Group and schedule your errands so that you avoid wasting gas
8. Reuse water. As example, keep a bucket or cup in the shower. The captured water could be used to water your plants
9. Take quicker showers
10. Wash full loads of dishes or clothing and select energy efficient cycle to save water and electricity
11. When in the market for a new car, buy a more fuel efficient car
12. Reduce meat consumption for a more plant based diet
13. Reduce food waste by being mindful of how much to buy and how much you can eat
14. Shop for furniture and household goods at consignment shops or thrift stores
15. Avoid purchasing bottled water. If you want great tasting filtered water you can buy a water filter pitcher for your refrigerator
16. If possible, compost food waste
17. Unplug small appliances and personal devices when not in use or when charged, such as toasters, coffee makers, hairdryers, lamps, cell phones and I-pads. Even when plugged in but not on, these things consume electricity, called Phantom energy. (This practice is also good for fire prevention)
18. Skip the plastic: bring reusable bags with you every time you go to the grocery store
19. Skip the plastic: avoid single-use plastics, such as straws, utensils and sandwich bags. Instead, bring with you your own utensils and reusable metal straw, or go without. There are products made of reusable beeswax to wrap sandwiches.
20. Buy products that do not have plastic packaging, as example, buy powdered laundry detergent or cat litter in a cardboard box, instead of products that use plastic containers
21. Instead of using disposable paper or plastic cups, use refillable cups
22. Buy natural cleaning products
23. Buy biodegradable cat litter
24. Use ceiling fans to cool the room you are in so you can raise the thermostat a few degrees, but turn off the fans when you are not in the room. Fans with Energy Star rating are more efficient than other fans.
25. In the summer, when you leave your home raise the thermostat a few degrees. In the winter turn of the heat when you leave or turn down the thermostat a few degrees.
26. Avoid dry cleaners that use perchloroethylene and petroleum solvents, which are toxic air pollutants. Some dry cleaners use eco-friendly products.
27. Idling at drive-throughs increases fuel consumption and GHGs. Instead of using drive-throughs turn off your car and walk into bank and fast food locations.
28. Limit or completely eliminate the use of fertilizers for your lawn
29. Donate your old clothes and household items so they can be reused
30. Buy clothes from consignment shops
31. Buy products from recycled materials: ex. toilet paper, computer paper, clothing
32. Buy fruits and vegetables from local farmers
33. Support local business, where the products are locally sourced
34. Hang your clothes on a line, if possible
35. Recycle old batteries, cell phones, computers, and other old electronics

36. Take your unused household hazardous waste, such as household cleaners, paints, and styro-foam packaging to hazardous waste recycling centers. Local governments, like Collier County, have several locations.
37. Avoid products with Styrofoam packaging and do not buy Styrofoam cups
38. Resole your shoes and mend your clothes
39. On days when you aren't in a hurry, let your hair dry naturally instead of using a hairdryer
40. Turn off lights, fans, and computers when not in use
41. Walk and/or bike to your errands or destinations, or take the bus or train if available
42. Do not litter
43. Turn off faucet while brushing teeth
44. Do not flush toilet every time you pee
45. Eat organic
46. Wash car less, let the rain wash it
47. Wash your clothes in cold water
48. Be more mindful about how your seafood is caught, look for seafood from sustainable sources
49. Use your clothes washers and dryers at night, to keep your home cooler
50. Clean or replace you a/c filter regularly, which allows the a/c system to work more efficiently
51. Close your blinds and drapes on the sunny side of your home to keep the home cooler and require less work from your air conditioner
52. Use natural light when possible, instead of turning on lights
53. Hold elected officials accountable to the following: (1) supporting policies for climate resiliency and reducing (mitigating) GHGs, (2) protecting the environment and natural resources, as nature is our best defense against the impacts of climate change, (3) supporting sustainable development practices, instead of sprawl.
54. When elected officials make environmental commitments, hold them to their promises. Clean water and protection of natural resources are popular campaign issues that help politicians get elected. However, while many politicians run on campaign promises of environmental protection, in reality they may support destructive bills and policies aimed at benefiting industries, while degrading the environment and leaving more people vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Demand accountability!

#### **WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME'S EFFICIENCY AND ADAPT YOUR HOME TO A CHANGING CLIMATE:**

55. Plant native trees near your home to provide shade and reduce use of air conditioners. Plant native plants for landscaping as they use less water and will likely endure the effects of climate change better.
56. Caulk around windows and doors to keep your home better insulated
57. Fix leaky faucets, shower heads, and sprinkler systems
58. If you have house, install a rain barrel to collect water to be used for irrigation, gardens or indoor plants

59. Buy energy efficient appliances, such as those that are Energy Star rated
60. Change to LED light bulbs. LED bulbs use 75% less energy than incandescent and last up to 25 times longer
61. Build a smaller home, as they require less energy to power, heat and cool
62. Upgrade your home with low-flow toilets and low water irrigation systems (microirrigation)
63. Consider living in multi-family housing, such as condos, villas, and townhomes, as that type of housing is considered a trait of “smart growth” because they consume less land and resources, often consume less energy than larger single family homes, and are often located closer to town and amenities thus requiring less driving.
64. Install solar for your home if possible. There are solar co-ops that can help you get a better price on installation and direct you to experienced reputable companies.
65. Get hurricane rated windows, shutters, or even plywood to protect your windows and home from storms
66. Keep your home insulated. Do your research for available options that are environmentally-friendly
67. Install pavers or pervious materials for driveways and walkways, which will allow water to percolate into the ground
68. When building new, elevate the home or build on higher ground to avoid flooding
69. If you have a pond, plant littoral plants along the pond, which are good for filtering pollutants and providing habitat
70. Avoid destruction of wetlands, when building a new home
71. If you have a septic tank, keep it cleaned and maintained. Leaking septic tanks can pollute nearby rivers and streams.
72. When building, use better building materials, such as recycled steel, bamboo, reclaimed timber
73. To better adapt to the impacts of climate change, have a hurricane preparedness list and a plan in place before a hurricane hits.
74. If you have a yard, grow a garden

#### **WAYS TO LESSEN YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT AT WORK:**

75. Drive to work less, work from home when possible.
76. If possible, take your bike or the bus to work.
77. Encourage zoom meetings, when face-to-face meetings are not required.
78. Carpool to work or to work functions
79. Use recycled copy paper and toilet paper
80. Use green cleaning products
81. Bring your water bottle or drink bottle to work, to avoid bottled water
82. Bring your lunch to work
83. Reduce disposable plastics at the work place, such as cups and utensils
84. Provide a planet-friendly 401K portfolio for your workers or request one if you are an employee, one where investments are not in fossil fuels, deforestation, weapons, etc.
85. For luncheons, pick caterers and restaurants that limit packaging and have delicious plant-based options

86. Print less, but when printing is needed encourage double-sided printing

**WAYS TO GET INVOLVED TO IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNITY'S RESILIENCE:**

87. Donate money to local environmental causes

88. Vote for green policies, including policies committed to reducing GHGs, and policies aimed at creating climate resilient communities

89. Vote for local conservation land acquisition programs, such as Conservation Collier and Lee County's Conservation 20/20. These programs protect natural lands, such as mangroves and wetlands, which are the first line of defense against climate change and storm impacts.

90. Support local ordinances that ban the use of fertilizers during the summer months, when fertilizers are not needed

91. Support programs that protect agricultural lands through permanent agricultural and conservation easements, such as Rural and Family Lands Protection Program.

92. Many local governments are currently working on their Climate Action Plans and Vulnerability Assessments. Attend those meetings and provide input.

93. Recommend that elected official install more charging stations at public places for electric vehicles.

94. Write a letter, encouraging local governments to install solar panels on public buildings

95. Understand what your local officials are doing to reduce the community's carbon emissions. If they are doing little to nothing, provide them with options.

96. Encourage local officials to support smart growth, which is mixed-use compact developments with higher densities and in the proper locations that do not impact wetlands, habitats, or agricultural lands

97. Volunteer for organizations that plant trees within the community

98. Volunteer for mangrove planting events and beach clean-up events

99. Educate yourself on climate change and environmental issues

100. Donate or volunteer at a wildlife hospital to help nurse sick and injured wildlife back to good health. The Conservancy's Von Arx Wildlife hospital could use your help and/or donations: <https://conservancy.org/our-work/wildlife-rehabilitation/>.

101. Support our mission to protect Southwest Florida's environment for current and future generations, become a member the Conservancy of Southwest Florida: <https://conservancy.org/support-us/membership/>