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**Friends of
the Earth**

Briefing

Climate top tips

50 ideas for how to reduce your own
greenhouse gas emissions

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- the most extensive environmental network in the world, with almost one million supporters across five continents and over 60 national organisations worldwide**
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in over 200 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of its income.**

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Climate Top Tips – 50 ideas for how to reduce your own greenhouse gas emissions

By far the most important thing that you can do about climate change is to support Friends of the Earth's climate change campaign, 'The Big Ask'. The Big Ask campaign calls for a strong climate change law that reduces the UK's carbon emissions year on year. Last year over 130,000 people supported us. The result? In March the Government published a draft Climate Bill.

Our next job is to make sure this Bill is strong enough to make a real difference. You can make a difference by asking your MP to support a tough Climate Change Bill at www.thebigask.com or sending in one of our campaign postcards.

Driving

Surface transport is responsible for about a quarter of the UK's emissions of CO₂ – and this is forecast to rise in the future. In the past 30 years traffic on our roads has more than doubled.

1. Do you need to drive your child to school? Sharing the school-run with a roster of parents is a great way to cut congestion, reduce emissions and save on your fuel bill. Liftshare helps you find other parents with whom to share the school run: www.school-run.org – or contact your child's school governors or PTA to ask them to look into a scheme.
Sustrans also provides more information about school travel plans: www.saferoutestoschools.org.uk/
2. Don't drive to the pub for your Sunday roast – make a day of it and cycle or walk instead.
Sustrans: www.sustrans.org.uk
3. Give your car a day off! Can you find a way to make your journey to work on foot, by bike or using public transport, for a few days a week?
Transport Direct have public transport information: www.transportdirect.org.uk
The national cyclists' organisation CTC have details of cycle routes in your area: www.ctc.org.uk

4. Small is beautiful. If you have to drive, a small, fuel-efficient car will produce less polluting emissions than a gas-guzzling 4x4 – and will be cheaper to run as well. Be aware though that although diesel cars tend to produce less CO₂, they do produce more of other pollutants, which aggravate asthma and other health problems.
Compare models and their CO₂ emissions at VCA: www.vca.gov.uk
5. Change your fuel. Many cars can use biofuels with little or no modification to the engine. Biofuels are produced from crops such as oil seed rape or sugar beet, and burning them produces lower emissions of climate-changing gases. Ask your garage or find a filling station which already sells it – there are 150 in the UK and the number is growing.
See www.biodieselfillingstations.co.uk
6. Keep your car tyres properly inflated. It's estimated that up to 80 per cent of car tyres are under-inflated, which can increase fuel consumption, and therefore emissions, by up to 5 per cent¹ – as well as increasing wear and tear.
7. Why not rent a car on a pay-as-you-drive scheme, rather than buying one? Smartmoves has a growing list of pay-as-you-drive car clubs:
www.smartmoves.co.uk
8. Another idea is to share. Liftshare organises car-sharing schemes, or the charity Carplus promotes responsible car use and is developing a network of both car clubs and sharing schemes. Alternatively you can ask your employer to do something to encourage lower car use, such as provide showers for cyclists to use or run minibuses from local stations.
Liftshare: www.liftshare.org; Carplus: www.carplus.org.uk
9. Drive with the windows up. This reduces drag, thus increasing your fuel consumption efficiency and lowering your emissions. Drag can also be lessened by removing heavy items and roof racks from the vehicle when you don't need to carry them².
10. Switch off the engine if you think you will be stationary for more than two minutes. Idling for this long burns more fuel than it takes to restart the engine³.

1 Carplus: <http://www.carplus.org.uk/carplus/Winter0405/Ecodriving.htm>

2 US National Security Council: <http://www.nsc.org/ehc/mobile/refuelin.htm>; [US] Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/consumer/18-youdo.pdf>

3 Environmental Transport Association <http://www.eta.co.uk/greentips/duringjourney.asp>

11. Change your driving style. Changing gear at a more modest engine speed can reduce fuel consumption by up to 15 per cent. When you are approaching traffic lights, slow down progressively rather than continuing at the same speed and suddenly braking; harsh acceleration and braking can use up to 30% more fuel and can lead to increased wear and tear on the vehicle. Plus, pulling away too fast uses up to 60 per cent more fuel⁴.
12. Avoid short car journeys. A cold engine uses almost twice as much fuel as a warmer one. Take a walk in the fresh air to the local shops instead – it's good for you!

Trips Abroad

Aviation is the fastest-growing contributor to climate change. Passenger numbers could more than double by 2030, and emissions from aviation could account for more than a tenth of UK totals by 2020. Cutting down on the amount you and your family fly will make a huge difference to your carbon 'footprint'.

13. Holiday in the UK. Flights abroad might seem cheap, but when you consider taxes and the cost of getting to the airport they often work out much more expensive than a train trip within these beautiful islands. And that's not to mention the emissions you'll save - one long-haul return flight can produce more carbon dioxide per passenger than the average UK motorist in one year⁵. Or, if you are going to holiday abroad, try and get the train.
14. Hire bicycles instead of a car if you are exploring locally. Not only will this save emissions, you'll save yourself some money too – and help to burn off any holiday excess. Local Tourist Information Centres will be able to give you advice on bike hire.
15. Cut down on business trips. Do you really need to travel to meet with colleagues? Could you use phone or video-conferencing? And if you really do need to travel, go by train rather than car or plane – as well as often being quicker, you'll be able to get some work done.
You can find alternative ways to travel at: www.seat61.com
16. If you are staying in a hotel on holiday, ask for your towels to be washed every other day instead of every day.

4 RAC: www.racfoundation.org

5 Netherlands Centre for Energy Conservation and Environmental Technology/DETR

Food and Drink

In the UK we spend £500 million every year on organic food but many of the environmental benefits of organic farming are quickly cancelled out if the produce is flown around the world. When organic produce is imported by plane from New Zealand, the transport energy used is 235 times greater than the energy savings of organic production⁶.

17. Think before you buy. Demand local *and* organic *and* seasonal – it's your right to be choosy! Avoid all air-freighted foods and if your shop can not assure you of this then don't buy.
18. Cook from fresh. Avoiding processed and packaged foods reduces the emissions generated by transporting multiple ingredients and products around the country or even the world, as well as in the production of packaging. Fresh is also better for your health.
19. Use a toaster rather than the grill to make toast - it will use less energy.
20. Buy local and seasonal where possible. Getting produce out of season means either growing it using glasshouses or importing it, sometimes by air. To find your nearest farmer's market, go to: www.farmersmarkets.net
21. Buy organic milk. It takes over three times as much energy to produce a litre of non-organic milk than a litre of organic milk. Much of this extra energy is used in the production of the fertiliser⁷.
22. Recycle aluminium. The energy saved by recycling one aluminium drinks can is enough to run a TV for three hours⁸.
23. Buy in bulk for everyday items. As well as saving money, this will avoid the emissions created when packaging individual items. If you don't use large quantities but still want to take advantage of the savings, share an order with a friend, colleague or neighbour.
You could use a wholesaler, such as Suma Wholefoods (www.suma.co.uk) or Infinity Foods (www.infinityfoods.co.uk).

6 Sustain: <http://www.sustainweb.org/>

7 BBC News: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/4038399.stm>

8 Environment Agency: http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/commondata/acrobat/recycle_975614.pdf

At home

Simple measures could substantially reduce the emissions from your home, and save you money as well - you could currently be paying £200 a year more than you need to in gas and electricity bills.

24. Does it need to be so hot? Turning the thermostat down by just one degree can save you up to £30 a year on your heating bill⁹ and make a real dent in your household's emissions.
25. Set your timer efficiently. If you are working regular hours, avoid wasted heat energy by timing your heating to go off 30 minutes before you leave the house, and come on again 30 minutes before you are due to get back.
26. Insulate your loft. You can cut up to 20 per cent from your energy bill by installing good quality loft insulation¹⁰; it stops heat from escaping and thus requires less energy to keep your house warm.
27. Beat draughts. They're the most uncomfortable and obvious signs of a badly insulated house and can be fixed easily with either draught-proofing or secondary glazing. You could also fit double glazing – the UK's most popular energy saving measure, although it actually saves less from a typical fuel bill than installing (much cheaper) cavity wall insulation¹¹. Make sure that you specify 'Low-e' glazing, which has a special heat-reflective coating that reduces heat loss through the window by nearly half.
Facts, figures and more advice from the National Energy Foundation:
www.nef.org.uk/energyadvice
28. Watch the floors. Rooms can sometimes feel cold due to strong drafts rising up from gaps between the floorboards or between the skirting board and the floor. This is easily resolved by investing in a tube sealant, such as silicon. Another way of reducing draughty floors is to insulate underneath the floorboards on the ground floor¹².

9 British Gas: <http://www.britishgasnews.co.uk/index.asp?PageID=19&Year=2003&NewsID=461>

10 *The Observer*: <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/cash/story/0,6903,399565,00.html>

11 National Energy Foundation: www.nef.org.uk/energyadvice

12 Energy Savings Trust: www.est.org.uk

29. Dress your hot-water tank correctly. A British Standard lagging jacket only costs £10 and the insulation for the pipe leading to the hot-water tank from the boiler costs around £3 per year. It's really easy to fit and should save you as much as £20 per year on your heating bill – if every UK household fitted a jacket on their tank tomorrow, over £150 million would be saved every year!
30. Reflective radiator panels can fit perfectly behind radiators. They are cheap to buy, easy to install and reflect back heat that would otherwise drift through the wall. They can be bought from DIY stores (avoid those made from PVC), or you can make your own by wrapping tinfoil around cardboard.
31. Draw your curtains at dusk. Sounds obvious, but a thick pair of curtains can stop a huge amount of heat from escaping through your windows.
32. Put a lid on it. Saucepans with lids on heat much quicker, using less energy in the process.
33. Use your oven sensibly. Don't keep opening it to check whether your food is ready – this allows heat to escape and will only make your meal take longer to cook, using more energy. And by switching it off just a few minutes before your food is ready you'll find that it'll stay hot enough to finish cooking the food.
34. Don't buy cut flowers. Every year, we spend around £1.35 billion on cut flowers in the UK, with imports accounting for 80 per cent of the flowers bought each year. Because of their short shelf life, the flowers are usually flown in – which gives them a massive climate change footprint because of the aviation emissions. To avoid this you can buy potted UK-grown plants – or if you're still going to buy flowers, choose those that are UK-grown and in season.
A number of organisations sell native trees and flowers mail order, such as:
www.tree2mydoor.com
You can also do a bit of good by using Charity Flowers Direct – an organisation run by Age Concern for the benefit of 170 charities:
www.charityflowers.co.uk Tel: 0870 5300 600
Investigate The Postcode Plants Database to find out which plants are local to your area before you make any purchases:
www.nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/life/plants-fungi/postcode-plants
35. Turn lights off! For comparison, lighting an empty office overnight can waste the energy required to heat water for 1,000 cups of coffee¹³.

13 Carbon Trust. www.thecarbontrust.co.uk/energy/pages/page_88.asp

36. Buy energy-saving light bulbs. Some of these can use less than a quarter of the electricity of their equivalents, and can last up to 12 times longer. Just one energy efficient light bulb can save you £10 a year on your electricity bill.
37. Make the most of nature. Light-coloured walls, ceilings and floors, as well as mirrors, reflect daylight, making maximum use of natural light and reducing the need to use artificial lighting¹⁴.
38. Use infrared. If you have exterior lights, ask your electrician to fit infrared sensors so that the lights only come on when you pass in front of them.
See: http://www.foe.co.uk/living/poundsavers/diy_outside.html
39. Resist stand-by. If all UK households turned off their TVs at night instead of leaving them on standby, we would avoid emitting enough CO₂ to fill the Millennium Dome 38 times each year¹⁵. Stand-by is expensive too – British people pay £163 million every year paying for the electricity used in keeping their appliances on stand-by. That goes for PC screens too¹⁶.
40. Unplug equipment once fully charged. Mobile phones, shavers and electric toothbrushes keep drawing electricity even when the battery is full.
41. Keep fridge and freezer doors closed. Each minute a fridge door is open it can take three energy-intensive minutes for it to cool down again. Similarly, it can take as much as half an hour for a freezer to regain its temperature once a door has been opened for just sixty seconds¹⁷. And remember to install the fridge or freezer away from hot appliances and direct sunlight.
42. Keep your freezer full. It takes less energy to keep a full freezer cool than it does an empty one¹⁸. If you don't have enough food to fill it, use plastic bottles filled with water or even scrunched up newspaper. If you find your freezer is often half empty, you might want to think whether you need such a large model when it is time to replace it.
43. Think how you cook. Pressure cookers and steamers both save energy; steamers are particularly easy to use and very healthy.

14 See: www.foe.co.uk/living

15 Kent Energy Centre: <http://www.kentenergycentre.org.uk/>

16 "a PC monitor switched off overnight saves enough energy to microwave six dinners" - Carbon Trust.
www.thecarbontrust.co.uk/energy/pages/page_88.asp

17 National Energy Foundation: www.nef.org.uk

18 Friends of the Earth: <http://www.foe.co.uk/living>

44. Chop finely and boil smart. The smaller you make your vegetables, the less time they'll take to cook. Don't forget to boil only the amount that you need, and match the size of the ring to the size of the saucepan or you'll be paying to heat air and keep electric hobs clean so the rings can work more efficiently¹⁹.
45. Only use a washing machine on full-load. Ninety percent of the energy that washing machines use goes toward heating the water²⁰, so switch to a cooler wash temperature: using 40°C for all clothes can use a third less electricity per wash. Today's washing powders are just as effective on low temperature programmes, saving both energy and money.
46. Carry out a Home Energy Check to find out how to save energy and save cash. The online questionnaire takes a couple of minutes, and you'll be sent a free evaluation of the areas of your home where cost-saving, energy efficiency measures can be made - see: www.est.org.uk/myhome/whatcan/hec/ or phone 0800 512 012 to request a paper version.

At Work

47. Reduce office paper consumption. A government-funded Envirowise campaign report, says that office paper consumption is rising by 20 per cent per year. On average each worker uses 50 sheets of A4 a day. If you work in an office, add the slogan "Think before you print" at the bottom of your emails. If you do have to, print double-sided.
48. Switch office equipment off at night. A photocopier left on overnight uses enough energy to make 1,500 photocopies (ref: carbon trust)²¹.

Bigger Investments

49. Invest environmentally. For as little as £250 it is possible to join a co-operative which invests in wind energy projects that promote emission-free technology. Or you could 'adopt' a local renewables project.
See for example Energy4All: www.energy4all.co.uk.
Yes2Wind is a coalition website which aims to provide information and resources for the public to support wind farms locally: www.yes2wind.com
The British Wind Energy Association (BWEA) also provide a database on wind energy projects: www.bwea.com/ukwed/

19 'Save Cash & Save the Planet'

20 UK Department of Energy: <http://www.eere.energy.gov/buildings/info/documents/pdfs/26468.pdf>

50. Install your own renewable energy system. Grants are currently available for up to 50 per cent of the capital costs of installing renewable energy. You might even make a profit: if you produce more than you need, you could sell the excess back to your energy supplier.

The Energy Saving Trust has more info on grants for solar photovoltaic panels:

www.est.org.uk

The Centre for Alternative Technology gives very good advice, how-to-do guides and runs courses for those wishing to generate their own electricity:

www.cat.org.uk

For non profit institutions such as schools, the Community Renewables Initiative will be able to help:

<http://www.countryside.gov.uk/LAR/Landscape/CRI/index.asp>

Other places to get information

Institutions

You can call the Energy Efficiency Helpline on 0845 727 7200 for free, impartial advice on how to make your home more energy efficient. Your trained advisor will also be able to inform you of the grants available in your area to help you save energy and money. Alternatively, you can do the online questionnaire which takes a couple of minutes, and you'll be sent a free evaluation of the areas of your home where cost-saving, energy efficiency measures can be made - see www.est.org.uk/myhome/whatcan/hecl/

- The Carbon Trust – www.thecarbontrust.co.uk
- National Energy Foundation – www.nef.org.uk
- Energy Savings Trust – www.est.org.uk
- Clear Skies grants - <http://www.clear-skies.org/>

... and Friends of the Earth's book – 'Save Cash & Save the Planet'.