

TIPS FOR CALCULATING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

The carbon calculator used by Net Zero estimates the carbon footprint connected to your travel, your home, your food consumption, and your purchases of goods (such as clothing) and services (such as going to the doctor's). The calculator uses your activities in each of these areas to estimate your overall carbon footprint – the total amount of carbon dioxide emissions associated with your lifestyle.

The bar chart on the right side of the calculator provides a running tally of your carbon footprint by area, as well as your total footprint (which can be found in the upper left of the chart). When you are finished entering information into the calculator, it is this total number that you use when you "Go Net Zero."

General tips for filling out the calculator

*The process starts with a quick estimate of your carbon footprint based only on where you live, your household size, and your income. Then the next step is to refine this estimate by entering specific information about your living patterns.

*Your entries should reflect the annual levels for your entire household (or, if you live in a multi-person household but just want to offset your own emissions, the levels associated just with you).

*If you find it difficult to provide anything but a very rough estimate for any entry, it is fine to use that approximate estimate. Any information you provide will lead to a more tailored footprint estimate.

*The calculator includes default/average estimates for the typical household in your area. If it is difficult for you to estimate certain information at all, you should just use the default estimates (already pre-entered into the input boxes in light font) or the average estimates (as shown on the sliders).

*In boxes with default entries, just type over those entries to provide your specific information.

*For further context or explanations about certain parts of the calculator, click on the question marks in the calculator's little square boxes.

Tips related to specific areas

*If you have a hybrid car, select gasoline in the drop-down menu.

*You don't need to enter the model or make of your car. Just provide estimates of how many miles you drive per year and what miles per gallon your car averages.

*For airplane travel, include the total miles flown by everyone in the household whose emissions you want to offset. Round-trip estimates should reflect the total miles flown, not just the miles flown in one direction

*Often the easiest way to estimate your home energy use is to estimate your typical monthly payment – for example, how much you paid for electricity in a certain month – and multiply that by 12 to come up with an estimated annual cost.

*"Goods" generally reflect purchases of tangible items like clothing and furniture. "Services" generally reflect purchases of activities provided by other people, such as by health care providers or an auto mechanic. The "advanced" option in the shopping category provides a good guide to various types of goods and services.