

HOW TO REDUCE YOUR

# DIGITAL FOOTPRINT

ARTS COUNCIL CLIMATE ACTION TRAINING

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## What Can We Do to Reduce Our Digital Footprint?

Measuring the impact of our digital carbon footprint varies a lot depending on who you are talking to. The global impact according to some sources is **as low as 1.4%**, and as **high as 4%** and growing, according to others.

Part of the challenge is calculating the **carbon footprint of the energy** we use to power the technology that makes it all happen. This varies hugely from country to country depending on the amount of renewable energy on individual electricity grids. Roughly, our digital activity represents between 2% and 4% of our global greenhouse gas emissions.

### Individual actions

The responsibility for decarbonising our electricity supply does not fall to individuals, nonetheless, whether we can calculate the exact emissions or not, there is a lot we can do individually to reduce our digital carbon footprint.

### Devices

- **Repair devices** and don't change them every two or three years. Correctly dispose of old devices.
- Buy devices that **are repairable**, refurbished or remanufactured.
- Keep the **battery levels** of devices between 20 and 80 per cent as this ensures a longer battery life.
- Don't leave devices plugged in at full charge. **Charge for short and regular intervals** as this also increases the battery life.
- Avoid **wireless chargers**, as they consume 50 per cent more energy!
- When not in use, **unplug chargers** – use a **power strip** for multiple devices.
- **Shut down** devices when not in use, especially at night (this also includes Wi-Fi or Bluetooth).
- Only use **large screens** or two screens when you have a task that justifies it.
- **Reduce the brightness** of your screens and use dark mode (or grey mode for mobile). This not only saves energy, but also reduces eye fatigue and dry eyes.
- Make sure to **close apps** and tabs and disable location services when not in use.
- **Reduce notifications** and the use of animated screen savers. This saves energy. \*



## Email

Individual emails have a tiny footprint, but it can add up! According to Berners Lee's book, *The Carbon Footprint of Everything*, a normal email has a footprint that ranges between 0.03g and 26g of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Remember, emails with big attachments have the biggest footprint. What can we do to reduce this?

- Regularly **delete old emails** from your inbox, particularly those with large attachments.
- **Use links** to online files, where possible, as opposed to attaching documents to emails. Cloud-based and other solutions like this help reduce the size of emails.
- Send a 'Reply all' email **only if necessary**.
- Empty your **Junk Email** folder regularly.
- **Unsubscribe** from unwanted or no longer needed newsletters.



## Digital Housekeeping

“Since we use the internet so much as part of daily life, it can be hard to think of it as having any physical impact. However, **each unit of data we deal with, whether it's sending an email, streaming a video or saving a file, has energy use associated with it**. The more data transfer it involves, the higher the associated energy use is. This happens in two ways. First, in the electricity your device uses to store, process and display what's happening at the user end. Second, internet and digital service providers store our data in data centres that require electricity and cooling on an intensive level to keep the machines working well.” (*Creative Carbon Scotland*)

Remember, only 5 per cent of data is actively reused after 90 days of storage.

- **Stop** keeping and storing data that will never be used again.
- **Review** and clean files and apps regularly.
- Think twice before downloading or uploading files or new apps.
- Reduce the **file size** of documents, images, video and other multimedia assets.



## Online Meetings

Virtual meetings are significantly less impactful in terms of their carbon emissions than in-person meetings, but nonetheless do have some hidden costs. What can we do to mitigate these?

- Use video when in a call **only as needed** (e.g. to meet and greet, when speaking or for small team meetings).
- Stream videos or audio in **standard definition**.
- **Reduce participation** in unnecessary online meetings.
- When all participants are in the office, **meet in person** and not online.
- Not all hosting platforms are equal! **Zoom and Google** are more efficient than Teams.



## Websites

- How green is your website? You can test it on this [Website Carbon Calculator](#) to find out!
- Is your website hosted by a green website hosting provider? Contact your provider and ask for their green credentials.

## Useful Links

Julie's Bicycle: Sustainable Screen Resource Hub - [Digital Technology Guide](#)

Creative Carbon Scotland: [Digital Carbon Footprint Guide](#)

Reset [Digital For Good](#)

Ethical Consumer: [Email Providers](#)

\* (*Nuvomagazine.com - Andrew Neely*)

