

## What Can WE Do About the Climate Crisis?

Eat a plant-rich diet. Food production is responsible for a quarter of the world's carbon pollution and a third of this is related to livestock.<sup>1</sup> Ruminants (beef cattle, dairy cows, sheep, goats) digestively produce methane, a shorter-lived but potent greenhouse gas that traps 80 times more heat than CO<sub>2</sub>. In addition, clearing forests for grazing cattle or growing animal feed releases CO<sub>2</sub> and reduces biodiversity. Instead, try a healthy plant-based diet, good for humans *and* the environment.<sup>2,3</sup>

MORE: Compost to enrich soil and keep food out of landfills where it can't decompose properly and releases methane. Reduce food loss and waste.

MORE: Be thoughtful where your money goes. Buy less stuff. Refuse, re-use, repair, recycle.

Electrify; replace appliances and vehicles that use fossil fuels with ones that use electricity. More than 40% of US energy-related emissions come from homes and transport. Rewiring America has electrification guides and an incentive calculator for savings.<sup>4</sup> We upgraded to an energy-efficient heat pump that provides both heating and cooling for our home. Our induction stove is safe and easy to clean. I am inspired by friends and family who are traveling by train, biking to work, or walking and using public transit to go car-less in the city. I still aspire to fly less.<sup>5</sup>

MORE: Some utilities allow you to support renewable sources of electricity or community solar.

SHARE: What are your favorite ways to conserve energy?

Vote for climate leaders who are most likely to make progress on climate actions, at all levels of government. State and local officials play a big role in what is happening where you live, influencing utilities, infrastructure, and planning for storms and extreme weather. Hold your elected officials accountable.<sup>6</sup>

MORE: Help turn inactive environmentalists into voters with the Environmental Voter Project.<sup>7</sup>

Connect with people at your workplace, school, faith-based group, or other association to promote climate activities. Kaiser Permanente is a champion of plant-based diets; when I worked there I shopped at the Farmers Markets they hosted, an easy way to support them. What would make your community better? Perhaps ask the School Board to upgrade to electric school buses that are healthier for your kids,<sup>8</sup> tell town planners that you want safer bicycle lanes, work with the town parks manager on green spaces. Get to know your neighbors. Help set up a library, school, or other safe space to be a resilience center for aid, services, and electricity.<sup>9</sup>

MORE: Be mindful that climate change affects communities differently and not equitably,<sup>10</sup> and that we are part of the global community.

What can *you* do? Think about your skills, what work needs doing, and what brings you joy.<sup>11</sup> Seek areas of interest on the Project Regeneration website.<sup>12</sup> Its compendium of approaches covers food and forests, land and oceans, the city and challenges, and more. Join a group where you can support and motivate each other; then show up, commit time, be engaged, jump in!

MORE: Learn how to advocate with Climate Changemakers.<sup>13</sup> Follow their step-by-step playbooks to reach out to policy makers, in a one hour zoom or on your own. Or, learn from your peers, as I did from neighbors addressing the town council about its Climate Action Plan.

Personal actions have more impact than you realize, beyond how much carbon didn't go into the atmosphere, by setting social norms and inspiring others. Level up by supporting community efforts or joining with others to advocate for change. Small actions add up and pave the way for systemic transformation. There's a lot we can do to make a better possible future. Eat less meat, vote, build neighborhood resilience, find a group – some of these I've embraced and others I'm still working on, as my climate journey continues. Choose your own climate actions, ones that are meaningful to you. Do *something*. Every little bit helps.

## REFERENCES

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3. Nutritional update for physicians: plant-based diets. PJ Tuso, Jun 2013, The Permanente Journal (<https://doi.org/10.7812/TPP/12-085>)
4. Rewiring America (<https://www.rewiringamerica.org>) – *useful resources for electrification*
5. *Run a carbon footprint* (<https://www.carbonfootprint.com/calculator.aspx>) *or ecological footprint* (<https://www.footprintnetwork.org/>) *calculator to see how to lessen your carbon impact the most.*
6. *Scorecards on environmental legislation. (New faces won't appear here.)* League of Conservation Voters (<https://scorecard.lcv.org>) *for U.S. House and Senate;* Climate Cabinet (<https://climatecabinet.org/climate-scores>) *for state legislators.*
7. Environmental Voter Project (<https://www.environmentalvoter.org>) – *non-partisan, data driven nonprofit*
8. All aboard the electric school bus! H Wallace, Sep 2024. (<https://reasonstobecherful.world/all-aboard-the-electric-school-bus/>)
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12. Project Regeneration (<https://regeneration.org>). *Each entry in the Nexus library of climate initiatives includes what-to-do action items for individuals, groups, companies, and government.* Project Drawdown (<https://drawdown.org>) *lists solutions and impacts, and has job function action guides (Drawdown Labs).*
13. Climate Changemakers (<https://www.climatechangemakers.org>) *Advocate, in an hour.*

### More ideas

>> Top 10 things you can do about climate change, D Suzuki (<https://davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/top-10-ways-can-stop-climate-change/>). “Consume less, waste less, enjoy life more.”

>> Feeling hopeless about the climate? Try our 30-day action plan. JR Platt, Dec 2021 (<https://therevelator.org/30-day-climate-action-plan/>) *Keep learning. Donate dollars or time to an environmental nonprofit.*

>> The false dichotomy of systemic and individual behaviour change. H Ritchie, Sep 2024 (<https://www.sustainabilitybynumbers.com/p/the-false-dichotomy-of-systemic-and>) *If you are at that stage, choose a career that contributes to solving climate problems.*

>> Climate One: What more can I do? Mar 2024 (<https://www.climateone.org/audio/what-more-can-i-do>) *podcast, transcript. We have most of the solutions right now; we just need to get moving.*

>> 100 things you can do to help in the climate crisis, S Lazarovic, Nov 2021. *Fun graphic!* (<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/a-new-social-justice/2021/11/15/climate-crisis-100-ways-to-help>)