

TEN SIMPLE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO REDUCE YOUR DIGITAL CARBON FOOTPRINT

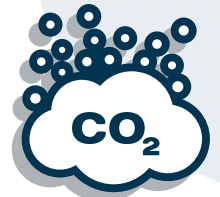
It's easy to feel powerless when thinking about the climate emergency.

But no matter how small your business, there are simple steps that each of us can take to make a difference. The excellent news is that taking these steps will improve your business.



Digital technology is one such area. Better use of existing digital technology could help cut 15% of UK greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, [analysis by The Royal Society shows](#).

But, for this to happen, we need to be increasingly mindful of our digital carbon footprints and ensure that the benefits of digital outweigh any harm it may cause.



Digital carbon footprints refer to the carbon released from making and using digital technology.

By learning how to make your digital operations greener, you are also improving your business. From faster page load times to improved user accessibility, the changes will support you to grow revenue sustainably.



This guide takes you through ten simple changes you can make to reduce your digital carbon footprint while increasing the impact of your website, marketing and communications.



1

FIND OUT HOW YOUR WEBSITE IS IMPACTING THE PLANET

Digital technology contributes to around 4% of global greenhouse emissions, double that of the worldwide aviation industry, according to the carbon emissions think-tank The Shift Project.



DID YOU KNOW ?

The average web page produces 1.76 grams of CO₂ per page view.

For a website with 10,000 monthly page views, that's 211 kg CO₂ per year, the equivalent of making nearly 3,000 cups of tea with milk. This may not sound like a lot, but with over 1.8bn websites on the web, the carbon soon adds up.

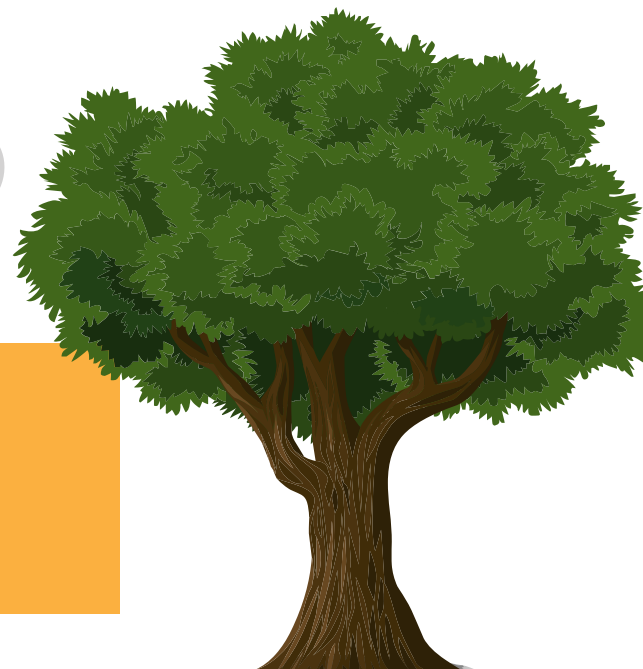
DON'T FORGET

Small changes make a big difference.

To start your journey to a greener website, you can use this free website carbon calculator to find out how much digital pollution you create.

As well as measuring the digital pollution emitted from your website, the carbon calculator will offer you tips to reduce your digital carbon footprint. These include:

- Switching to a green host
- Making your website more efficient
- Planting trees to reduce your carbon impact



2

MAKE SURE YOU'RE USING A GREEN HOSTING PROVIDER

One of the best ways to reduce your digital carbon footprint is to switch to a green hosting provider.



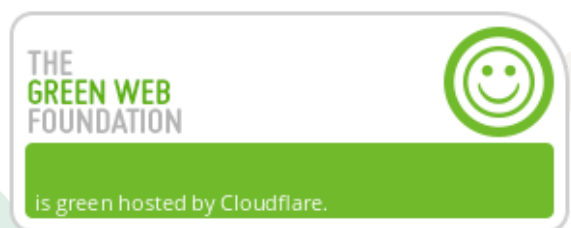
DID YOU KNOW?

Switching to a green hosting provider will reduce your CO2 emissions by around 9% a year.

You can use this [free tool from the Green Web Foundation](#) to find a more sustainable option.

If your website is hosted by a website developer, speak to them about changing your website to a green hosting provider. The change will be inexpensive and easy to make.

You can then show your customers that you care about sustainability by displaying the Green Web Foundation's 'hosted green' badge on your website.



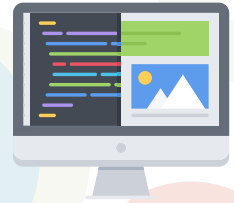
With [research by the Capgemini Research Institute](#) showing that 79% of consumers are changing preferences based on a business' social or environmental impact, switching to green hosting is good for your business.

If you're just starting your business, then use the Green Web Foundation to pick a green hosting provider. Our [free guide on starting your own business](#) in South and Vale also has lots of advice to support your start-up journey.

3

SIMPLIFY YOUR USER EXPERIENCE

Every click someone makes on your website has an impact on the environment. How you structure your website can reduce this environmental impact.



Simplifying user journeys also improves the customer experience by making it easier for people to find what they want.



There are a number of practical things you can do to make your site less complex. These include:

- Reviewing your navigation structure. Do you need every menu option?
- Removing all drop-down categories from your navigation bar by rethinking how you structure information on each page
- Making sure you only have one call to action on each page
- Forcing yourself to prioritise information and cut unnecessary elements on the page. It may be challenging, but you end up with a more engaging website that better supports your customers and the planet

4

MAXIMISE THE VALUE OF EACH PIECE OF CONTENT

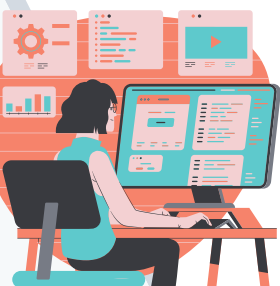
Every piece of content you create adds to your digital carbon footprint. It's therefore vital that everything you publish adds maximum value.

Here are some ways to improve the efficiency and impact of your content:



Always ask what problem the piece of content solves for a customer. How does it address any fears and frustrations that they may have?

Rather than ad hoc blogs, focus on creating reusable assets such as lead generation tools and automated email series to nurture future customers. Reusable assets such as these are scalable and enable you to reach and engage more people without constantly creating new content.



Conduct a digital spring clean. Review your metrics and remove content that is out of date or not being read. This means you are not wasting energy on serving content that is no longer of value to your audience. It's also a great way to ensure your content is up to date and relevant.

5

MAKE SURE YOUR IMAGES ARE AS SMALL AS POSSIBLE



Images are one of the most significant contributors to carbon emissions on most websites.



Reducing image size will increase your site's page speed, which in turn improves user experience.

Page speed is also an important part of Google's search algorithm - the quicker your site, the better your search engine optimisation (SEO) and the more likely people are to find you.

Here are some practical steps you can take to reduce the environmental impact of your photos and speed up your site:

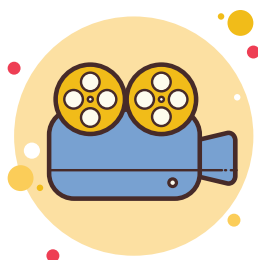
- The format you save your files in has a significant impact on file size. Google launched the WebP format to 'create smaller, richer images that make the web faster'. WebP is the most efficient format for photography, with files typically 30% smaller than most JPEGS
- Make sure all your images are as small as possible by using compression tools such as [Image Optim](#), [ShortPixel](#) and [TinyPNG](#)
- Pixels add weight, so use a shallow depth of field to take photographs or blur the edges of your image. This can reduce image size by 47%
- [Organic Basics](#) created a low impact version of their website by replacing typical fashion photography with vector illustrations of garments. This approach reduces data transfer by up to 70% in comparison to their regular website

6

BE MINDFUL OF HOW YOU USE VIDEO

Online video, including streaming services, represent around 20% of the greenhouse gas emissions associated with digital technology. Make sure that any video adds genuine value to your target customers.

Here are some steps to minimise the environmental impact of video, which also improve user experience and SEO:



1 Ask whether you need the video. For example, would an interactive animation work better?

2 Save the video at the lowest resolution possible



3 Keep the video short, around 30 seconds if you can

4 Avoid setting the video to autoplay, so that the energy needed to play the video is only used when someone wants to watch it

5 Choose static images over carousel image galleries. Carousel galleries cause digital pollution and are bad for SEO. Choosing the most important image and message will also improve user experience.

7

THINK ABOUT COLOUR

Did you know that running Google Maps in night mode causes the display's power usage to fall by 63%?

This is because colour affects the amount of energy your screen uses, which impacts file size.

Black uses the least amount of colour, and white uses the most. Google research has found that blue pixels consume 25% more energy than green or red.

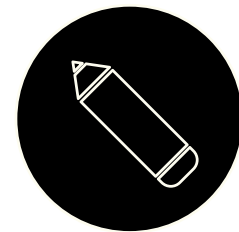
Practical ways to apply this knowledge include:



Use night mode as much as possible for your devices



Aim to create darker designs with less blue



The higher the colour variation in an image, the larger the file size, so choose images with reduced colour differentiation.

DID YOU KNOW?

All this will reduce the energy consumption needed to use your website.

8

USE EFFICIENT WEB TYPOGRAPHY

Using pre-installed system fonts is the most efficient choice as your device doesn't need to make extra calls to the server to download bespoke fonts.

For Apple, these are Arial, Times New Roman and Helvetica.

For Android, it's Roboto.



However, this does restrict creative freedom and your ability to develop a unique brand. So, if you do use non-system fonts, be strategic by using them where they have the most impact, for example, in your headings.

9

MAKE EVERY EMAIL COUNT



OVO Energy's 'Think Before You Thank' campaign showed that if every Brit sent one less thank you email a day, we would save 16,433 tonnes of carbon a year - the same as 81,152 flights to Madrid.

While most of the carbon associated with reading your emails is embodied in your digital device, making every email count is still an important way of reducing your carbon footprint.

Being more mindful about your email is also good for business and your mental health.

Here are some tips on making every email count:



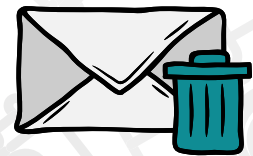
Make sure any business emails you send add value to your target customers. For example, it's better to send fewer high-quality emails to a targeted audience than lots of generalised emails to everyone on your mailing list.

Think before you send - do you need to send this email?
Do you need to cc people?



Include a link rather than an attachment. For example, Microsoft Office allows you to share a link to a document via its share options, or you can use a service like WeTransfer.

Delete emails that you won't need again to prevent them from being stored unnecessarily.



SUBSCRIBED



Unsubscribe from email newsletters you never read.

10

THINK ABOUT WHAT DEVICE YOU USE AND KEEP IT FOR LONGER

There is 100 times more gold in a tonne of e-waste than a tonne of gold ore.

DID YOU KNOW ?

Up to 83% of carbon associated with your laptop comes from the manufacture of the device rather than using it.

Here are some easy things you can do to make a difference and save money:

If you only keep your phone for two years, half the carbon is tied up in how the device was made. Keep your device for as long as possible to minimise the impact it has on the planet.

Protect your devices with screen protectors and covers. Always repair them if possible.

If you do decide to replace a device, think about using second hand or rental services. But most importantly, always recycle your old device.

Here are some organisations that can help:

- Make a difference, give a laptop or tablet for schoolchildren to use, a national campaign coordinated by the BBC. In Oxfordshire, Secret Santa 365 started its Laptops4Learners Appeal during lockdown, but has carried on collecting
- Recycle your Electricals helps you locate a site near you



- Small electrical items, cables and chargers can be tied into a carrier bag and left next to your black bin on collection day. Remember to remove any batteries and recycle them separately

South Oxfordshire residents - [more information here](#)

Vale of White Horse residents - [more information here](#)

The type of device you use makes a significant impact on your digital carbon footprint.

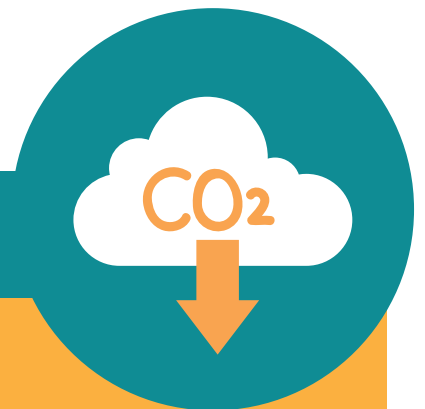
Research by the Carbon Trust and the University of Bristol shows that the carbon footprint of watching a 50-inch TV is roughly 4.5 times that of watching on a laptop and around 90 times that of watching on a smartphone.

If you just want to do a quick Google search, use your phone and save some carbon.

CASE STUDY: KEEPING IT EQUIPMENT FOR LONGER

The University of Edinburgh ran a pilot to keep computers for longer.

By keeping desktop and PC monitors for six years rather than four they showed they could save approximately 380,000 kg of CO₂ per year. That's the equivalent of keeping more than 150 cars off the road!



FIND OUT MORE: RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOU

1. [How bad are bananas? The carbon footprint of everything](#)
2. [Sustainable Web Design](#)
3. [Ecograder: how green is your website tool?](#)
4. [Sustainable web manifesto](#)
5. [The Sustainable Results Lab guide to reducing waste in content marketing](#)

ABOUT SUSTAINABLE RESULTS LAB

The content of this report was produced by Ruth Smith, founder of [Sustainable Results Lab](#).

'We are a marketing and communications agency focused on building the low carbon economy one customer at a time.'

The climate emergency means that we need sustainable businesses to be the most successful ones. So, we use the latest tools and techniques to support sustainable growth.

This includes using insights from neuroscience and the behavioural sciences to increase impact while minimising environmental harm.

We can help you to measure and reduce the carbon footprint of your website, while ensuring this goes hand in hand with increasing revenue.

To talk through how you could apply these findings to your business, [book a time to chat with me.](#)

GREENING THE WEB CHECKLIST

Have you...

- Used [this free website carbon calculator](#) to find out how much digital pollution you create?
- Switched to a green hosting provider?
- Structured your website and simplified the user experience?
- Maximised the value of each piece of content?
- Made sure your images are as small as possible?
- Minimised the environmental impact of video on your website?
- Thought about your use of colour?
- Used efficient web typography?
- Become more mindful of your emails?
- Thought about the devices you use, and how long you use them for?

If you have any questions, please [get in touch with us](#).