

# CARBON CONFESSIONAL

HOW TO COME CLEAN ABOUT YOUR GREENHOUSE GASES



ORGANIZATION	BREADTH	LOOK AND FEEL	SOPHISTICATION	TRANSPARENCY	PEEVES	COOL FEATURES	RESULTS SAVABLE?	MY RESULTS (metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> /year)
<b>BERKELEY INSTITUTE OF THE ENVIRONMENT</b> (educational) <a href="http://coolclimate.berkeley.edu">coolclimate.berkeley.edu</a>	Super-comprehensive. Home, transport, food, goods, services, and indirect emissions.	Busy but clear. Lots of fields requiring lots of detailed information.	Ultra. Crunches large number of variables, including some indirect sources.	Pellucid. Lots of backup with full data sources and calculations.	Takes forever to complete. Goods and services computation is kind of loosey-goosey.	Excellent summary of results in graphic form.	Yes	11.1 (34 including indirect emissions)
<b>BP</b> (commercial) <a href="http://bp.com">bp.com</a> (Click on "Environment and society," then "Maps, reports and tools")	Modest. Home and transport, which unlike many others includes public transit and business travel.	Oddly cramped. Weird animated portrayal of your lifestyle, full of quivering objects.	Low. Lots of averaging. No attempt to quantify home energy use. Crude vehicle mileage averages. Britcentric to boot.	Opaque. No information as to how results are derived.	Calculating your carbon impact on an oil company's Web site induces cognitive dissonance.	The world's third-largest private oil company didn't have to provide a carbon calculator.	No	19
<b>EPA</b> (government/educational) <a href="http://epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html">epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html</a>	Modest. Home, transport, and some lifestyle.	Not bad for government issue!	Medium. Oddly omits air transport. Compares poorly with the fabulous U.K. government Web site <a href="http://actonco2.direct.gov.uk">actonco2.direct.gov.uk</a> .	Clear. Spreadsheet version available with all calculations viewable.	Puts enormous weight on recycling.	Lots of links to more in-depth specialty calculators.	No	9.69
<b>GLOBAL FOOTPRINT NETWORK</b> (nonprofit/educational) <a href="http://footprintnetwork.org/calculator">footprintnetwork.org/calculator</a>	Super-comprehensive. Home, transport, food, consumption, and recycling.	Clever choice: basic (fast) or detailed (more accurate) results. The details could be more detailed, though.	High. Goes beyond carbon emissions to assess other environmental effects of one's lifestyle.	As much backup as you might want. "A consensus, committee-based process" develops its standards and methodology.	Annoying "personal avatar" and overcomplicated animation.	The annoying animation does give a feel for the impacts of our resource-draining lifestyles.	Yes	19.6 acres of "the Earth's productive area," or 4.4 Earths if everyone lived like me
<b>AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH/NATIVE ENERGY</b> (commercial/sells offsets) <a href="http://climatecrisis.net/takeaction/carboncalculator">climatecrisis.net/takeaction/carboncalculator</a>	Narrow. Home and transport only.	Clean, simple, and very short—only one page.	Low. Only allows for one car. Estimates energy by how much you pay, not therms and kilowatt-hours.	Satisfactory. But you need to read the small print first to use the calculator correctly.	Geared toward selling offsets. If you use the defaults, you'll get a very large bill.	Uses different emission factors according to length of flights, an important variable.	No	8.85 (\$108 to offset; \$216 if defaults used)
<b>LOW IMPACT LIVING</b> (commercial/sells appliances) <a href="http://lowimpactliving.com">lowimpactliving.com</a> (Click on "impact calculator")	Super-comprehensive. Home, transport, appliances, trash, and water.	Handsome, clear, and easy to navigate.	High. Carbon is just one piece of final score.	Murky. Claims to be based on "published, peer-reviewed equations and techniques," but details aren't posted.	Geared toward selling energy- and resource-efficient goods.	Displays both dollars and resources saved by taking certain steps like landscaping with native plants.	Yes	11.6
<b>NATURE CONSERVANCY</b> (nonprofit/educational but sells offsets too) <a href="http://nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/calculator">nature.org/initiatives/climatechange/calculator</a>	Comprehensive. Home, transport, food, and recycling.	Elegant and solution oriented. Starts with list of positive actions. Cumulative score at bottom of screen.	Low. Lots of estimates and averages, little personalization. Does include indirect emissions, however.	Clear. But you have to read the small print to know that indirect emissions are included.	Methodology makes results oddly unpersonalized.	Nice graphic display compares results with U.S. and world averages.	No	25.35 (including indirect emissions)
<b>REDEFINING PROGRESS</b> (nonprofit/educational) <a href="http://myfootprint.org">myfootprint.org</a>	Super-comprehensive. Home, transport, food, water, recycling, and consumption.	Monumental. Lots of photographs, which sometimes get in the way. Running sidebar can be distracting.	High. Could be more precise, though; relies on ranges instead of specifics. Goes beyond carbon emissions.	Lots of backup, if not the formulas themselves.	Idiosyncratic results measured by acres required to absorb carbon, and Earths to provide the necessary resources.	Takes a shot at quantifying consumption, a huge variable most calculators leave out.	No	63.1 carbon acres; 4.85 Earths; 188.14 total acres
<b>TERRAPASS</b> (commercial/sells offsets) <a href="http://terrappass.com">terrappass.com</a> (Click on "Calculate your footprint")	Narrow. Home and transport only.	Simple but effective. Clearly shows figures per category, plus cumulative total.	Medium. But superlative for air travel: allows you to specify airports and even airlines. There's a difference!	Opaque. Total lack of explanation.	Geared toward selling offsets. Give-away: Figures are by household, not individual, making them larger.	Calculates home energy use by zip code, letting you compare with others in your area.	No	9.8 (\$108 to offset)

ILLUSTRATION BY GILBERT FORD