

How Cool are You—environmentally, that is...

A tool for assessing ecological footprint—young adult edition

New Community Project

Ecological Footprint is the amount of the earth's productive capacity a person draws on to meet their consumption patterns. If the world's productive land and coastal areas were divided evenly among the world's 6-plus billion people, there would be about **4.5 acres per person**. Currently, the average global per capita footprint is 5.1 acres, so that overall, the human family is **over-budget**. But it gets worse: over 50 of the poorest nations in the world have a per capita footprint below 4.5 acres, while North Americans on average use **23.7 acres per person**. Another way of looking at this: if all the world's people lived like North Americans, we would need **four more planets** to provide for us.

How large is your footprint? Gonna pass, fail or barely scrape by? Only one way to find out... take the test!

- | | | | |
|---|-------------|---|-------------|
| 1. Transportation | Points ____ | 5. Bottles/cans | Points ____ |
| ▪ I have a car, and use it almost daily | 0 | ▪ I buy more than one packaged drink per day | 0 |
| ▪ Have a car, but hardly use it | 5 | ▪ I buy more than one, but always recycle them | 1 |
| ▪ Don't have ready access to a car | 10 | ▪ I average one or less per day and always recycle them | 2 |
| Bonus: I own a bike and use it | 1 | ▪ I never buy beverages in bottles or cans | 4 |
| If you use a car, estimate the average miles driven each week _____ | | Bonus: I regularly pick up cans/bottles (or fish them out of the trash) to recycle | 1 |
| 2. Food I | Points ____ | 6. Appliances | Points ____ |
| ▪ I have meat of some kind 2-3 times/day | 0 | ▪ I have my own frig, stereo, computer | 0 |
| ▪ I might have meat once a day | 2 | ▪ I share most appliances with other people | 2 |
| ▪ It's unusual for me to eat meat more than a couple times a week | 4 | ▪ I don't own appliances like these | 4 |
| ▪ Practically or actually vegetarian | 6 | Bonus: I always cut off lights, shut down computer, etc. when finished | 1 |
| ▪ Hardly any meat AND I intentionally try to buy organic foods and beverages | 8 | 7. Paper | Points ____ |
| Bonus: I have given up eating some kind of food for ecological reasons (e.g.: shrimp, as raising and/or harvesting them is destroying coastal ecosystems) | 1 | ▪ No real effort to buy paper with recycled content and I use clean paper for all my projects | 0 |
| 3. Food II | Points ____ | ▪ Paper I purchase is at least 30% recycled | 2 |
| ▪ I eat snack food (chips, candy, etc.) or fast food every day | 0 | ▪ Only buy 100% post-consumer waste and use both sides of paper religiously | 4 |
| ▪ I may eat junk food a couple times a week | 1 | Bonus: I buy toilet paper with recycled content | 1 |
| ▪ I don't touch the stuff | 2 | 8. Television | Points ____ |
| Bonus: I won't use paper plates or cups wherever they're offered | 1 | ▪ Have one in the room and watch it daily | 0 |
| 4. Showers | Points ____ | ▪ Have one, but watch it a couple times a week | 1 |
| ▪ Typical daily shower of 10+ minutes | 0 | ▪ Have access to one, but lucky to have it on in a week | 2 |
| ▪ 7-10 minutes | 2 | ▪ Don't have ready access to one and hardly ever watch TV | 4 |
| ▪ 5-7 minutes | 4 | | |
| ▪ 3-5 minutes of water running | 5 | | |
| ▪ 3 minutes and out | 6 | | |

(over)

9. Clothing	Points ____		Your Score!	Total Points ____
▪ I buy what I want when I want it		0	50 or above=A (Footprint of 10 acres or less)	
▪ I wear things out and buy only then		1	35-49=B (Footprint: 10-12 acres)	
▪ I wear things out and shop Goodwill		2	25-34=C (Footprint: 12-15 acres)	
▪ I buy only clothes made of organic materials		3	15-24=D (Footprint: 15-20 acres)	
			below 15=F (Footprint: 20+ acres)	
10. Eco Aware	Points ____			
▪ Don't know what you're talking about		0		
▪ Have taken an enviro class or attended and/or joined an enviro group of some kind		4		
▪ Live on another plane of enviro consciousness		6		
▪ Have written Congress on an enviro issue and/or attended enviro event or seminar		2		

CO2 totals

Average miles driven per week (from no. 1 above) ____ x 52= _____. This equals average pounds of CO2 per year emitted by your vehicle use (on average, every mile driven creates one pound of CO2).

Notes on Young Adult Footprint

Transportation: The Union of Concerned Scientists puts personal car use as the worst enviro action of US consumers. Every mile driven puts on average one pound of CO2 (global warming gas) into atmosphere. Fossil fuel pollution will take 8 months off each of our lives. And every mile not driven spares .0001 squirrels and other small furry creatures from untimely and gruesome demise.

Showers: A 7-minute shower uses more clean water (35 gallons) than 1.1 billion of the world's people have access to in a week. Heating water for showers can create as much as 1500 pounds of CO2 per person per year.

Bottles/cans: US'ers throw away 30 million water bottles per day. Not recycling an aluminum can is like filling it half full of gasoline and pouring it out (energy equivalent saved by recycling one can).

Food I: Meat consumption, and especially beef, is responsible for a high percentage of US water pollution (16%), water consumption (can require 8000 pounds of water to produce one pound of beef), land use (45% of all US land is for pasture or raising grain for livestock), and endangerment of other species (25% of US endangered species are threatened due to destruction of habitat for raising livestock). 80% of Amazon deforestation (total deforestation of approx. 6 million acres/year) is a result of clearing land for cattle pasture, with much of this beef shipped abroad, including to a fast food place near you.

Food II: US'ers pitch about a pound of packaging per person per day, and a good chunk of this is from snack foods and fast food; 40% of litter is either fast food or snack food packaging.

Paper: Making one pound of paper from trees takes 3½ lbs. of wood and creates 3 pounds of CO2. 20% of the world's deforestation is for paper production. Paper manufacture is the number one source of water pollution in the US. 75% of tree farms for paper production in Southeastern USA occupy formerly diverse forest land—tree farms have 95% less biodiversity than natural forests. One person using toilet paper with 100% recycled content saves 1 tree every 12 years.

Television: TV is the no. 1 promoter of the consumer culture, both in the US and around the world. The average young adult watches 24 hours of television per week. At an average of 20 minutes of advertisements per hour, that's over 400 commercials per week and 20,000 commercials per year.

Clothing: Cotton is the most toxic crop in the world: 25% of all the world's insecticide use is for raising cotton, yet cotton grown on only 3% of the world's farmland. Clothing is also one of the most widely traveled commodities in the world, with over 80% of clothing in US stores coming from abroad. This requires fossil fuel to ship: 60,000 container ships arrive at US ports each year. One of these ships traveling one mile creates as much pollution as a car driving around the world.

[Sources: Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices (Union of Concerned Scientists); State of the World 2004; Nielson Ratings; New York Times; United Nations Development Program; Organic Consumers Association; Toiletpaperworld.com.]