

## Duncan's tips to save green when going green



Recycle your old refrigerator. Austin Energy will give you \$50 for your working refrigerator. In return, it pledges to recycle it so the appliance doesn't end up sitting in a landfill.



Plant a tree. In cooperation with the nonprofit TreeFolks, the city gives homeowners free trees. Help to replenish one of the earth's most important natural resources.



Get a free gas heater from the city (if you qualify). Natural gas heaters are cheaper and more energy efficient than electric heaters. Those who do not qualify for a new one can get a \$75 rebate toward a new gas furnace.



Install a solar water heater and get a rebate from Austin Energy (\$1,500 for new homes, \$2,000 for existing homes). It requires installation of a rooftop system, in which water is piped, heated, then stored in an electric water heater inside the house. "Everybody gets excited about putting solar panels on their roofs to generate power," says Duncan, "but it's really more efficient to take that sunlight and turn it into hot water heating."



Install a programmable thermostat. The city provides them free. "We have a hard time keeping those things around sometimes," Duncan says.

The banks aren't loaning, but Austin Energy is. Take out a zero-interest loan (yes, zero!) to install things like solar shading on your windows, attic insulation, air duct sealing or an energy-efficient air conditioner.

For details on city rebates for Austin Energy customers, visit [austinenenergy.com](http://austinenenergy.com) and use the links under "save money" to find what you need.

# A Smaller Footprint

BY JESSICA NORMAN DUPUY

Carbon footprint. The term is not new, but if someone asked you today what it is, could you answer?

**Carbon footprint (n.)—the amount of greenhouse gases produced to directly and indirectly support human activities, usually expressed in equivalent tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)**

What you eat, where you go, what you throw away and the amount of electricity you use all affect your carbon footprint.

*Austin Monthly* put two young people to the test to see if they could reduce their footprints with the right advice. They

filled out an extensive survey to measure their carbon footprints, then changed a few simple habits for a week and calculated how new habits, if maintained for a year, could affect their footprints. The results might make you think twice before you throw away another plastic bottle or drive to the corner store rather than walk.

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# Kelley Denby,

27, customer liaison at Briley's Upholstery



We asked Kelley Denby about her typical day, then made a few suggestions to help reduce her carbon footprint.

### ON AN AVERAGE DAY, DENBY ...

### FOR ONE WEEK, WE ASKED DENBY TO ...

Takes a 10-minute shower.

Take a five-minute shower.

Recycles glass and plastic bottles.

Follow the city's list of materials that can be recycled, including cardboard and plastic food containers.

Leaves the water running while brushing her teeth.

Turn off the water while brushing teeth and use cold water instead of warm whenever possible, including washing clothes.

Runs errands any time she can.

Choose one day for errands like banking and picking up dry cleaning.

Leaves her thermostat on most of the time to regulate temperature.

Turn her thermostat off and use blinds on moderate days to warm or cool her house.

Has 14 appliances plugged in.

Unplug appliances not being used except those used as clocks.

Brings her lunch to work, but uses disposable plates and plastic forks.

Bring food in reusable containers and use silverware from home.

Air conditioning and heating account for more than half of electricity use in the average American home.

Save 100 pounds of carbon during a light bulb's life for each incandescent bulb replaced with a compact fluorescent bulb.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how green do you think you are? 5

How much was your last electricity bill? \$107.50

Do you drive a lot? Yes, about 300 miles per week

How many lights in your house have energy-efficient bulbs? Zero

What do you do to be more green? Use reusable bags when grocery shopping, buy at the farmer's market and recycle glass and plastic bottles

Personal cars and trucks in the United States produce 20 percent of America's carbon emissions.

The average American's footprint is 27 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions a year.

The city suggests using The Nature Conservancy's carbon footprint calculator to measure your own emissions at [nature.org/initiatives/climate-change/calculator](http://nature.org/initiatives/climate-change/calculator).



Denby's typical footprint is 34 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year.

If Denby kept up her small daily changes, her footprint could be 27 tons of carbon dioxide emissions.

Denby travels a lot by car, which increases her footprint considerably. She often cooks at home and buys food from the farmer's market, which helps cut down on carbon emissions, but living in a home with poor insulation, older appliances and regular light bulbs

doesn't help. Denby easily recycled more once she understood all that could be recycled curbside. She even began recycling items from work.

The hardest part is carpooling and using public transportation. Denby lives in South Austin, nowhere near coworkers or a convenient bus stop. What she learned, though, is that one person can make a difference in her own way. "It changed my perspective," says Denby. "I have a responsibility, even if everyone else around me is not doing it."



Adam Longley,  
27, independent contractor



On a scale of 1 to 10, how green do you think you are? 3

How often do you eat out?  
10 times a week

What do you eat? Usually a sandwich or burger, but always a lot of meat

How often do you fly each year and what is the average flight time? Four to six flights of about four hours each

How many appliances are plugged in at your house that aren't being used? 13. Two televisions, two laptops, a microwave oven, three phone chargers, an iPod dock, a DVD player, a Playstation 2, Super Nintendo and an electric razor charger.

Airplanes are responsible for 12 percent of transportation emissions.

The world average is only 5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per person each year. The United States contains only 5 percent of the world's population yet contributes 22 percent of the world's carbon emissions.

Longley's typical footprint is 37 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, or 10 tons more than the average American.

If Longley kept up his small daily changes, his footprint could fall to 29 tons a year, or about a 20 percent reduction.

One of Longley's big challenges is his eating habits. To get meat from farm to table makes a huge impact on a footprint (think transporting feed for the animal to the farm, getting the meat from farm to market and adding the energy it takes to cook the meat—compared with eating raw vegetables,

We asked Adam Longley about a typical day and gave him carbon-cutting suggestions.

ON AN AVERAGE DAY, LONGLEY ...

Leaves the television on when he's at home for background noise.

Recycles a couple of glass bottles, but not much else. In a month, he filled his city recycling bin to only about a quarter of its capacity.

Leaves the computer on all day.

Drives to work and to run his errands.

Eats out for lunch and dinner on a regular basis.

Uses plastic bags from the grocery store.

Leaves all appliances plugged in.

FOR ONE WEEK, WE ASKED LONGLEY TO ...

Be more selective about television, turning it on only for shows he watches.

Follow the city's list of materials that can be recycled.

Turn the computer off any time he's not using it.

Use the bus when convenient.

Eat out only five times a week and cook more at home.

Reuse bags and carry items that don't need bags.

Unplug everything not in use.

Find the list of items you can recycle at [www.ci.austin.tx.us/sws/recycling.htm](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/sws/recycling.htm)

Plus, Longley told us he flies about five times each year, which racks up the carbon emissions.

The good news: Longley found it easy to change some of his earth-unfriendly habits. He started dining out less and recycling more, which also saved him some cash (bonus). He had no trouble hopping on the bus, especially since he lives just north of downtown, where lots of bus lines run every day. "I learned that it's really pretty easy to make a difference," he says. "The changes you make aren't hard, but you have to be deliberate about breaking bad habits."

If Longley took one less flight a year, his footprint could fall by almost 7 percent.



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