

# Additional Discussion/Lecture Options

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Here are two ways that a discussion of the MPG illusion might be broadened:

## **(1) Improving Daily Decisions: The Principles of “Choice Architecture”**

In their book *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (Yale University Press, 2008) Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein offer six principles for helping people make better decisions:

1. Set defaults to encourage people to make more prudent choices.
2. Provide explicit feedback to help people recognize when they are doing well and when they are making mistakes.
3. Help people see the connection between their options and what choices will actually make them better off.
4. Design incentives so that benefits and costs are clear.
5. Design “forgiving” systems that take into account the fact that people will make mistakes.
6. Structure complex choices so they are easier for people to understand.

### Discussion

Students could discuss how well GPM serves as a nudge; how the principles above could be applied to greenhouse gas decisions; or how the principles might be applied across a range of daily activities.

## **(2) Improving Greenhouse Gas Decisions**

Prior to class, students might be instructed to monitor a few daily activities and use carbon footprint calculators to see how the activities affect greenhouse gas emissions.

Students could then answer the following questions:

- Which activities surprised them as either larger than expected or smaller?
- Which carbon footprint calculator was most useful, and why?

Students might also reflect on questions about the lack of readily accessible greenhouse gas information:

- What behaviors would be changed by having clear and easily accessible greenhouse gas information in daily life?
- Is there a tendency to focus on frequent behavior that involves obvious fossil fuel use (such as driving a car) while neglecting less common behavior (air travel) or behavior that is not obviously tied to greenhouse gases (diet, such as the fossil fuels used in fertilizer and the methane released by large mammals)?
- Is information enough? How might incentives be used to change behavior? What are the pros and cons of incentives? How might values and norms be instilled to produce better greenhouse gas decisions?
- After discussing the ideas behind *Nudge*, how might defaults be used to improve greenhouse gas decisions?