

Local Climate Action Guide



*What to know, do, and say —
at home, work, and in your community*

You Have the Power to Make a Difference

Start Right Where You Are

There is so much you can do to put your concerns about climate change into action in your home, neighborhood, and local community. We live in complex times with busy lives, but through action **you can advance climate solutions and hope at the same time**. View hope as a verb. Because you can make a big difference, from the actions you take (as a role model for everyone around you) to how you talk! This guide helps you do both.



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Key Facts on Climate

- ✔ **Every community is feeling the impacts now.** Extreme heat, floods, fires, drought, and unprecedented storms are affecting people's lives and livelihoods.
- ✔ **You can make your community stronger** by modeling solutions at home and urging your community to boost resilience while stopping the pollution that is causing our climate to change.
- ✔ **Solutions are already here.** Communities across America are advancing accessible clean energy and transportation, green spaces, and resilience hubs: solutions that improve our health, wealth, and well-being.
- ✔ **Climate solutions save money and increase property values.** Wind and solar are cleaner and cheaper than coal or gas. The [Climate Policy Initiative](#) estimates the global cost of inaction at \$1,266 trillion, while the [OECD](#) says stronger action now avoids massive risks and brings significant economic gains.
- ✔ **Pollution and climate impacts harm us all**, but more so people least able to access their basic needs. Community-level efforts to strengthen resilience and support solutions should be informed by and equitably benefit residents most impacted.
- ✔ **The benefits of climate action** include healthier air, water, and people, lower medical costs, more nutritious food, good-paying jobs, and more resilient communities (just to name a few!).
- ✔ **Over 70% of Americans are concerned about climate change**, so chances are your neighbors are too. Multiply your impact by inviting them into action (and save money and live healthier lives like you).
- ✔ **The next generation is counting on us.** We owe it to our children to act now for thriving nature and communities so they can have healthy, prosperous lives.

FREE Climate Ambassador Training



To help you feel more confident and successful speaking about and acting on climate, you can get started with our [free hands-on training](#). You can take this 3-hour online training individually at your own pace or with a group of friends, neighbors, or colleagues.

In Your Home



Residences account for about 20% of carbon pollution in the United States. For a typical American household, heating, cooling, and vehicle fuel make up 2/3 of your impact, plus 40% of the energy is wasted. Reducing your impact can make a meaningful difference and *save you money* (up to half your utility bills)!

Save money by saving energy. Adjust your thermostat to 68 in the winter and 72 in the summer, turn off unused lights, and ensure doors and windows are insulated. Find more actions (and how) from Energy Star [here](#).



Switch to clean energy. Whether you are a renter or homeowner, a growing number of [regional power companies](#) offer wind or [solar](#) energy. States also offer [incentives](#) for homeowners to install solar panels.

Drive clean. Use public transportation, walk, or bike when you can. Transition to a [hybrid or electric car](#) when ready, and take advantage of incentives available.



Increase plant-based protein. Double up on fruits, vegetables, and nuts in your diet, and grow your own if you can. Eat it all and compost the scraps ([40% of all food in the United States](#) goes to waste!). Choose fish or poultry over beef. If every American cut their meat consumption by half, we could cut agricultural climate pollution, which is 9.4% of the total.



Eliminate waste wherever you can. Use glass and reusable containers instead of plastic bags and wraps. Take reusable bags to shop. Make sure everyone in your family has a reusable and portable water bottle, coffee mug, and utensil set.



Remember

Everything you do helps to impact the problem and influence others around you. But the *most important* thing you can do is **vote**, because scaled action on climate happens when there are policies and programs to do so locally, regionally, and nationally.



In Your Neighborhood



You can multiply your impact by setting a good example, helping your neighbors, and collaborating with them to implement solutions you can all enjoy.



Green your neighborhood. Restore nature by planting trees and native plants. This comes with [multiple benefits](#): increased property values, reduced heat, improved mental health and community well-being, better air quality, and cleaner water.

Increase neighborhood sustainability. If you don't already have recycling, water conservation, [efficient street lighting](#), [a community garden](#), a [food pantry](#), or book or tool [sharing programs](#), start one! These kinds of programs increase sustainability and build connections among neighbors. Additional ideas can be found [here](#).





Create emergency protocols for extreme weather and disasters. Ensure phone, email, and other [contact information](#) is shared with each household, and plans are created to ensure each neighbor is cared for and accounted for in an emergency. Use [this template](#) as a sample based on best practices.

Help others. If your neighborhood is progressing, reach out to other neighborhoods that could use your help, where it would make a big difference. You can also collaborate to build support for [community solar](#).



Share your care. Multiply your results. Invite your local newspaper to do a story on your home and neighborhood. Share your progress on your neighborhood listserv, in neighborhood meetings, with flyers, on social media, and in person with your colleagues and others in your community.

In Your Community



Gather with neighbors and others in your community and help your schools, houses of worship, healthcare, and city-owned places to advance climate solutions. Encourage your elected officials to raise their ambition, too.



Go 100. Press your city to commit to using [100% renewable energy](#) and offering the choice of renewable energy options for residents and businesses by 2030. Clean energy goals show leadership, create local jobs, and improve community health. Encourage city officials to track progress and celebrate milestones to keep momentum strong.

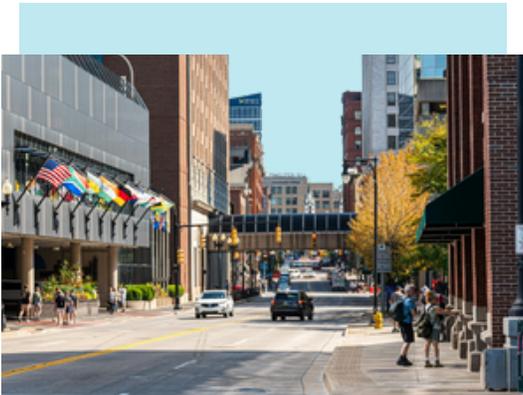
Plan. Ensure your city has an ambitious [Climate Action Plan](#) with input and buy-in from all key constituencies, including people from underrepresented communities. A strong plan sets direction, aligns priorities, and turns community vision into clear next steps everyone can support.





Build resilience. Volunteer for or help start a commission to build and implement a community Climate [Resilience Plan](#) to be prepared for and withstand climate impacts, including provisions to protect services and businesses, and care for residents, particularly the most vulnerable.

Go Clean. Advocate for more accessible mass transit and cleaner transportation, including [electric school buses](#), [rail](#), [bikeshares](#) (and protected bike paths), and [electric city vehicles](#). Cleaner transportation makes daily life easier, quieter, and healthier. Encourage your city to invest in electric fleets and charging infrastructure, connect bike paths to transit, and make walking safe and convenient. When cleaner options are available, more people use them, cutting pollution for everyone.



Raise efficiency. Ensure city officials weatherize and practice [energy efficiency](#) in government buildings. Improving efficiency saves taxpayer dollars and reduces emissions. Ask local leaders to upgrade lighting, heating, and cooling systems in public spaces, and share the results. Visible progress helps residents and businesses follow suit, showing that smart energy use benefits the whole community.

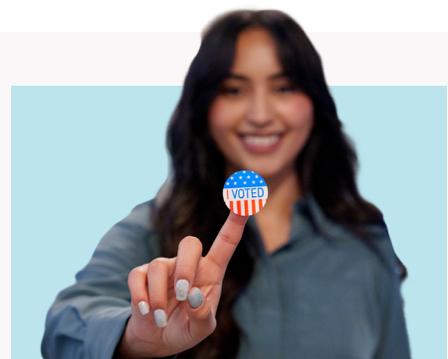
Greening spaces (offices, parks, plazas, schools, healthcare facilities, houses of worship). [Plant trees for a cooling canopy](#), natural flood resistance, and [overall beautification](#). Choose [native species](#) that benefit the ecosystem and are low maintenance. Find ways to [“green” unexpected areas](#), like bus stops, walkways, and [parking lots](#).



Compost and recycling. If your city does not yet offer [recycling](#) or [composting programs](#), ask your local leaders to implement them. This includes having recycling and composting receptacles in central places throughout the city, [special composting and recycling bins](#) as part of residential waste management, the use of compost in city parks, and rich compost give-back days to residents to use in their own personal gardens.



Vote. The most important thing you can do to advance climate resilience and action is to **vote**. [Vote](#) for candidates who prioritize solutions. Vote for ballot measures that bring forth or enhance any of the solutions listed above, or that make access to any of the solutions listed in the home or community more affordable or accessible.



5 Steps to Effective Climate Communication



The following are 5 steps to creating and delivering emotionally resonant, personalized, and effective messages on climate change. You can also take the free 3-hour climate [ambassador training](#) to boost your skills and confidence.

1 Start with people, stay with people.

1

If you want people to care about climate change, care about them. Listen. Start by honoring their concerns and values, such as family, community, health, and fairness. Move from people to climate. Make room for ambivalence with a simple statement like “some of us are more worried about climate change than others” to inspire people to engage with an open mind.

2 Make it real.

2

Focus on local realities everyone can see with their own eyes, like changing seasons. Include a memorable fact or two from a trusted source. Bring forward your own climate journey to personalize the issue. Stories sell, numbers numb.

3 Focus on solutions and personal benefit.

3

Many people don’t realize that power plants are shifting from coal to solar, wind, and batteries — and it costs less. The best new cars and trucks coming from GM and Ford are electric. It’s not about sacrifice. Solutions are here, and they save money, create good jobs, clean our air, and protect our health and communities.

4 Inspire and empower.

4

We need to move Americans from concern to action on climate. We’re told we can’t make a difference on climate change when the opposite is true. Every day, almost everything you do — driving, eating, talking — can impact the problem and the people around you. So, ditch the doom and gloom. America can lead on climate solutions, and so can your state, town, family, and you!

5 Be thoughtful when talking about climate change.

5

Give examples, ideas, and steps they can take that are meaningful, accessible, and relevant. Be sure to stay above the fray and don’t get caught in the trap of arguing to refute false information. Keep it simple, big picture, and on what is important. End with your “ask,” encouraging your audience to act on climate.

Climate Topics + Conversation Starters

You don't have to lead a march or deliver a speech to make a difference. **A few sincere words at the right moment can have a profound effect.** Climate change touches nearly every part of our lives, which means there are endless opportunities to talk about it in ways that feel natural and personal. Even if you are catching up with a neighbor, simply naming the changes you're seeing and the hopes you have for your community helps break the silence. Plant the seeds of awareness, connection, and possibility. **The key is inviting others in** versus trying to educate.

This section offers **sample phrases and conversation starters** to help you speak with confidence and clarity about the benefits of climate action, the values that motivate you, and how we can all play a part.

1. Helping Our Community Be Resilient

What to Say:

Talk about the need to make your neighborhood more prepared in the face of increasingly severe storms, floods, droughts, and heatwaves. Emphasize how resilience planning isn't just about individual preparedness; it's about looking out for one another. Bring up ideas like creating emergency plans, planting shade trees, or making sure vulnerable neighbors are checked on during extreme weather.

Where You Might Say It:

At a neighborhood association meeting

"What if we made an emergency contact plan or cooling center map for the block?"

At the bus stop, during heavy weather

"These storms are getting more intense every year. Our city needs to be doing more to prepare for flooding, right?"



2. Stopping Pollution and Protecting Our Families

What to Say:

Talk about how climate action is a common-sense way to cut the pollution that harms our health and communities. Convey the benefits of clean air, safe drinking water, and healthy local ecosystems. Note how cleaner transportation and energy help improve everyone's quality of life. Bring up ideas like creating emergency plans, planting shade trees, or making sure vulnerable neighbors are checked on during extreme weather.

Where You Might Say It:

At a block party or community event

"Don't you wish we had spaces like this? I'd walk a lot more if we did. How do you think we can get the city to build more?"

Backyard chat with a neighbor

"We shredded the leaf litter last fall, instead of using the city pick up, and now I'm seeing so many more birds in the flower beds. It's amazing how nature restores itself with a little care!"

Waiting for the school bus

"I saw one of those electric school buses recently and realized how ours put out so much exhaust. Our kids should breathe cleaner air."



3. Caring for People and Families Most Impacted by Extreme Weather

What to Say:

Extreme weather is disrupting our lives, livelihoods, and neighborhoods. Acknowledge that while everyone is affected by climate change, people with fewer resources often face the greatest challenges. Conversations that highlight shared humanity and fairness can open doors to climate discussions that center care and inclusion.

Where You Might Say It:

At the grocery store, noticing rising prices or shortages

"A lot of this is tied to extreme weather and our changing climate. It's tough for families already struggling."

After a school pickup on a hot day

"The heat is getting brutal these days. And not everyone can afford to just crank up the A/C."



4. Ensuring the Health of Our Children and Communities

What to Say:

Connect with others over a shared concern for health, especially the health of children. Air quality, clean water, and protection from heat are things almost everyone cares about. Share how you've started paying more attention to pollution and weather changes because of your concern for your kids', your family's, or your own well-being. This kind of framing helps people see climate action as personal, not political.

Where You Might Say It:

At the kids' sports practice (on an air quality alert day)

"I'm so torn, do we keep them inside because of the air? Or let them play because they need the exercise? We need the city to have a better climate action plan."

After the pediatrician appointments

"Our doctor mentioned how climate change is affecting kids' health. We started doing what we can at home."

At the park or playgrounds

"These sun shades make such a difference! We need more of this with all this heat."



5. Protecting Local Nature and the Places We Love

What to Say:

If someone loves the outdoors – whether it’s hiking, fishing, hunting, or gardening – they already have a reason to care about climate change. Point out how rising temperatures, floods, and introduced species are changing the natural places we all enjoy, and that we can all do something to protect the nature we love. Focus on local environments (rather than far-off ones they’ve never visited), and remind them that protecting nature means protecting our health, happiness, and sense of home.

Where You Might Say It:

On a hike with a friend

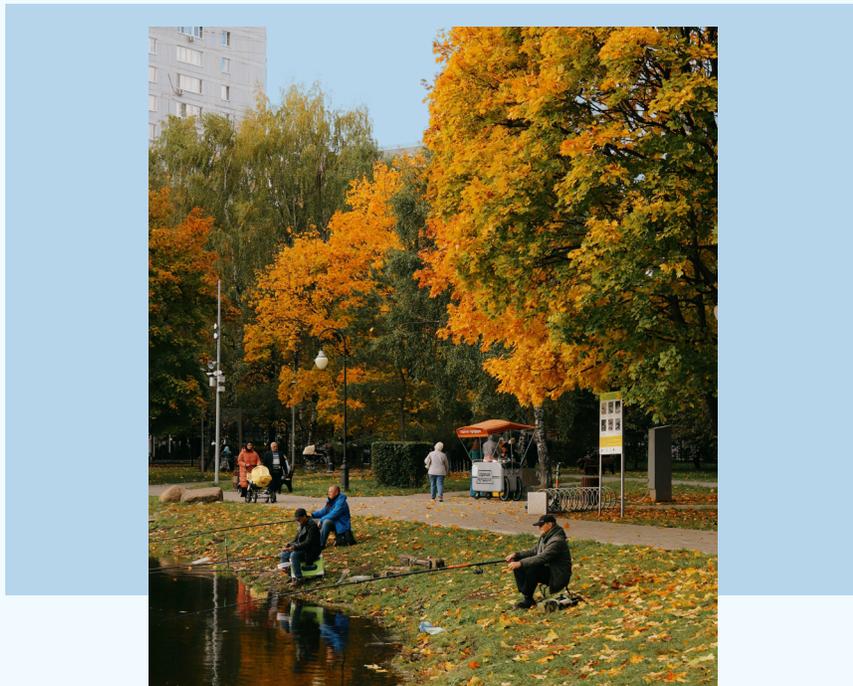
“This river has changed so much, look at all the erosion! Storms are much bigger now, and I’m worried this place won’t be the same if we don’t take action now.”

At the farmers’ market

“I love knowing this food was grown locally. I noticed the apples at the grocery store came from New Zealand. How can we justify that when the climate is changing so fast?”

On the lake, while the fish aren’t biting

“I heard fish populations are going down because the climate is changing. Do you think that’s happening here?”



6. Creating Good Local Jobs and Saving Money

What to Say:

Talk about how clean energy and climate solutions are creating jobs and saving households money across the country. Mention your own experience with lower energy bills.

Where You Might Say It:

At the family reunion

"We wanted solar panels, but found out we could just subscribe to a 'community solar' project. We haven't had to pay an electricity bill all summer!"

At a gas station, while fueling up

"I'm hoping my next car is electric, it would save a ton on gas!"

At a school event or community picnic

"I've been encouraging the kids to consider careers in clean energy. That's the future, and I think they'll have really good job security."



How to Respond to Questions, Concerns, and Disinformation

When people express doubt or concerns about climate change, it's often rooted in deeper cultural mindsets, like fear of economic loss, worry about change, or skepticism of government. The most effective way of responding to doubts or disinformation is not to argue facts, but rather to focus on what's working, what's possible, and why

it matters to all of us. Reframe the conversation to focus on hopeful, practical, values-based ways of seeing the world. This section offers simple, forward-looking ways to respond to common concerns. Use these affirmations to shift the conversation toward shared values, real solutions, and the benefits of climate action in everyday life.

1 Climate change touches many challenges we already face

"It can be hard to think about climate change when there are immediate concerns like affording groceries, access to healthcare, or secure housing. But climate change impacts all these things directly. The good news is that climate solutions help people. Cleaner air, lower utility bills, more reliable transit, healthier food – it's all connected. Acting on climate is a way to improve life right now, in real and immediate ways."

2 Energy security starts at home

*"Renewable energy is made right here in the United States, it's **reliable**, and it keeps running when oil supplies run dry, gas prices spike, or the grid goes down. Solar, wind, and other renewables are the **cheapest sources of energy that have ever existed**, and they can power a booming economy that is insulated from shocks, embargoes, and foreign conflicts."*

3 Solutions are investments that strengthen communities

*"Climate-smart **investments create jobs** that can't be outsourced and **save money** on energy, healthcare, and disaster recovery. Energy-efficient buildings cost less to keep at comfortable temperatures, clean energy is cheaper than oil, coal, and gas, and we are healthier from less pollution."*

4 Inaction is expensive

*“Inaction is expensive and harms families by driving up food and insurance prices, putting us at greater risk of disaster, and disrupting our lives. It’s time to **end subsidies for oil and gas** and allow cheaper clean energy to thrive. By acting now, we can **protect our economy** and **make life more affordable** for everyone.”*

5 Taking climate action is the **sensible thing to do** – for our **health, safety, and economy**

“Preparing for extreme weather, transitioning to cleaner, cheaper energy, and reducing pollution are practical steps that protect our families and communities. They are common-sense choices that impact our everyday lives. Acting now ensures we protect our family’s health today and our children’s future tomorrow.”

6 The time is **now**

*“**We still have time!** Every bit of progress protects what we love for tomorrow. Climate change is already happening, but it’s happening in degrees. Action protects us now, and **we can repair the harm** that’s already been done. Cutting pollution and caring for one another bring immediate benefits and protect our future, even in the face of enormous challenges. We can **start now, here in our local community!**”*

7 **Most people care**, they just think they’re alone

*“More than 70% of Americans are concerned about climate change, but many think they’re in the minority. This perception leads to silence, which can make us feel isolated. The truth is: **you’re not alone** in your concern. By speaking up, you help people realize they’re surrounded by others who care, and change becomes a lot more possible.”*

8 **What can one person really do?**

“While corporations and governments bear the greatest responsibility in solving climate change, individual actions do matter, especially when they help to set new norms in families, neighborhoods, and communities.”

9 **Electric vehicles** are a cleaner, more affordable way to get around, and they're only getting better

"EVs can save drivers money over time through savings on fuel and maintenance. With more options and manufacturers on the market, the cost of EVs is coming down, making them more accessible than ever. Charging infrastructure is expanding rapidly, ensuring that long-distance trips are not just possible, but also convenient and cost-effective. Advances in battery technology and recycling are reducing environmental impacts. While we must still strengthen regulations to [ensure that mineral resources are ethically sourced and responsibly mined](#), the transition away from fossil-fueled vehicles means vastly reduced climate impact."

"While there are initial upfront costs associated with electric vehicles, the savings on fuel and maintenance are recouped in 3–7 years, leading to savings over the vehicle's life."

"Electric vehicles offer ranges that cover daily commuting needs and more. Technological advancements are extending ranges to 200 - over 400 miles. Refer to [Consumer Reports](#) for more information."

"The charging infrastructure is rapidly expanding in the U.S. Tools like [PlugShare](#) and [ChargePoint](#) provide maps of charging stations. State governments and private companies are expanding charging networks to meet the growing demand for EVs, enhancing accessibility nationwide, including in [rural](#) communities."

*"**Battery technology** is evolving to be more sustainable. Recycling programs and advancements in battery chemistry are minimizing the environmental impact. Learn more [here](#) and [here](#). See additional talking points about batteries [here](#)."*

How to Moderate Disinformation

Even when you lead with values and focus on solutions, you may still encounter misinformation or disinformation, especially online or in politically charged spaces. The next section offers guidance on how to respond with clarity and confidence when false or misleading claims arise, without repeating or amplifying the harm.

Disinformation is widespread and often amplified by people or organizations with something to gain. But you don't need to argue to make a difference. A calm, confident approach works better. Start by serving up a "truth sandwich," and a side of "bypassing."

When you hear or see something misleading, use this 3-step strategy:

1 Start with a strong truth

Lead with a clear, accurate statement that reflects your values.

2 Indicate the lie

Briefly and without repeating it. Avoid amplifying the specific language.

3 Return to the truth

Always repeat truths, never the lies. Reinforce the accurate message so it's what people remember.

EXAMPLE: Applied to a situation where someone questions the value of clean energy:

Truth

"Clean energy, like solar and wind, is far better for our health, our communities, and our economy."

Indicate lie

"Influential people and organizations are asserting false claims about how transitioning away from fossil fuels impacts health, the economy, and our way of life – because they benefit from the way things are."

Truth again

"But the facts are clear: clean energy already provides over 40% of our power nationwide – it brings good-paying jobs and makes our air, water, and environment cleaner and healthier for all."

Start Right Where You Are

You have the power to make a difference in your home, neighborhood and community.

Learn more and find free resources and training to help you take local action.

[ecoAmerica.org](https://www.ecoAmerica.org)

ecoAmerica
start with people