

## What is a Carbon Offset?

Air travel is among the highest generators of greenhouse gas emissions; approximately 2.4% of global carbon dioxide emissions in 2018 (895 million metric tons) were attributed to [air travel](#). Carbon offsets are a great way to counterbalance the amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) released into the atmosphere when air travel cannot be avoided. Purchasing offsets involves funding projects that reduce GHG pollution (funding renewable energy projects or supporting water restoration projects) or that capture or store existing carbon dioxide (landfill methane capture or tree planting and land management). Making conscious choices to reduce and offset the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere has a positive impact on the environment and increases demand for more environmentally friendly practices.



## How can I reduce GHG emissions?

One of the most sustainable options is to avoid air travel, and instead teleconference or choose a lower-carbon alternative such as a bus or train. If flying is required, it is possible to make sustainable choices to reduce the amount of carbon pollution. Take-off and landing require the most fuel during a flight, so eliminating connections by choosing direct flights can help reduce carbon emissions. An additional way to reduce GHG pollution is to pack lightly since heavier airplanes require greater fuel consumption. For more information on sustainable and alternative transportation options to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, visit our [transportation page](#).

## Despite best efforts, I have to travel for work at times. How do I offset the related emissions?

1. When considering a flight, the first step is to check to see if the airline offers the option to pay a surcharge based on the miles to be traveled. Two examples:
  - a. Delta Airlines: [https://www.delta.com/content/www/en\\_US/about-delta/corporate-responsibility/carbon-emissions-calculator.html/#mean](https://www.delta.com/content/www/en_US/about-delta/corporate-responsibility/carbon-emissions-calculator.html/#mean)
  - b. United Airlines: <https://united.conservation.org/>
  - c. A list of other airlines may be found at: <https://www.conserve-energy-future.com/airlines-that-offer-carbon-offset-programs.php>

2. It is important to understand the impact of your travel and lifestyle choices by measuring your carbon footprint. Since not all airlines provide the opportunity to purchase a carbon offset, use the following calculator to calculate the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere based on the mileage of your journey:  
<https://sustainabletravel.org/our-work/carbon-offsets/calculate-footprint/>.
  
3. Visit one of the following links to purchase offsets. These provide options to fund various projects either domestically or internationally (e.g., methane capture, organic waste digestion, forest regeneration, clean water access, solar or wind projects, secure and sustainable agricultural practices, etc). Optimize your offsets by funding more than your journey and choosing projects that also support sustainable development in addition to carbon capture or reduction. For example, projects that create local jobs, improve public health and education, and benefit the local community. We recommend the following two sites to search for a certified carbon offset project based on their stringent standards and measuring requirements and processes:  
  
<https://www.green-e.org/certified-resources/carbon-offsets>  
<https://www.goldstandard.org/take-action/offset-your-emissions>
  
4. Tell us about your offset purchase (reason for purchase, amount, what type of offset, why you did it, and why it is important!). We will want to feature you in our communications efforts to help encourage others to make sustainable choices.

