

# Carbon footprint

More companies are calculating their 'carbon footprint'. Are they doing enough in the fight against global warming?

1 Which words in the box form collocations with the word 'carbon'? Check you understand each collocation.

carbon	emissions	power	dioxide	copy	paper
	tax	atmosphere	greenhouse	industry	footprint

2 Scan the article below and underline any expressions with the word 'carbon'.

## A company's 'carbon footprint'

The *Rolling Stones* are starting their latest tour. Who would believe that when they did their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour, back in 2002 / 2003, they started the trend of giving back a tour's CO2 emissions by ... buying trees! This involves paying for enough trees to absorb the carbon dioxide produced by the concerts, especially from transporting tons of equipment and dozens of people around the world! Does this really help the environment? *Coldplay* are now the latest band to pay for trees in order to 'carbon neutralise' their music. They have just spent over £100,000 to buy the rights to 50,000 trees in Mexico. However, the CO2 is absorbed only for the life of the trees; when they die, the gas is released back into the atmosphere. Critics say bands like *Pink Floyd* and celebrities like *Leonardo di Caprio* are simply buying carbon rights to trees which would have been planted anyway.

The scheme is part of a growing interest in tracking your 'carbon footprint'. A 'carbon footprint' is defined as 'a representation of the effect a person, or company, has on the

climate in terms of the total amount of greenhouse gases he or she produces'. This is measured in units of carbon dioxide. The average American is responsible for about 20 tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year. This is a much higher pro capita figure than that of any other industrialised country. Not surprisingly, as the US accounts for more than 20% of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions.

Many companies are considering ways of reducing their 'carbon footprint'. This way, they promote their business as being 'environmentally responsible'. One way of reducing their impact on our environment is to use a green energy supplier. They will supply electricity from renewable sources (e.g. wind and hydro-electric power) – reducing the 'carbon footprint' contribution from electricity to zero. Other ways companies can reduce their footprint are buying from local suppliers to reduce transportation costs, and using recycled materials. Or maybe there's a CEO out there wishing to plant trees to offset his or her company's emissions!

3 Read the whole article. Do you think buying trees helps in the fight against global warming?

4 Find words or expressions in the article from the following definitions.

- |  |               |
|--|---------------|
| (a) to take in a gas, liquid or other substance                | (Paragraph 1) |
| (b) to stop something from having any effect                   | (Paragraph 1) |
| (c) the type of weather of a country or region                 | (Paragraph 2) |
| (d) gases that stop heat from escaping from the atmosphere     | (Paragraph 2) |
| (e) to do something that balances the effect of something else | (Paragraph 3) |

Definitions based on: *Macmillan English Dictionary* Text © Bloomsbury Publishing Plc 2002

5 Consider the following ways of reducing your companies' 'carbon footprint'. Can you add any more ideas? Choose three which you think would be feasible to introduce in your company.

Buy from local suppliers to reduce transportation costs Reduce staff travel, especially air flights Allow staff to work from home one day a week Encourage staff to save energy	Use a green energy supplier Buy goods made from recycled materials Reduce the amount of paper used at work Exchange company cars for fuel-efficient vehicles
--	---