



How to make your website greener

So it's Sunday morning, you're sitting down at the computer, and you decide to read your favorite website. You groan. The site is taking too long to load. This scene may seem innocent enough, but were you aware of the fact that your websurfing has an impact on the environment?

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Although they might seem ephemeral, websites have real world environmental footprints. Their files are stored on servers, viewed by personal computers, and connected via networks. To operate these components, all of which are necessary to create a complete website experience, electricity must be consumed. And to generate much of that electricity, fossil fuels like coal and natural gas are often burned. So when you are sitting in New York viewing a website hosted in California, there are power plants on at least two continents that may be causing carbon dioxide to be released into the atmosphere in order for you to watch that video or read that blog. Since millions of people are surfing the web every hour of every day, that carbon footprint adds up to substantial international emissions each year. In fact, according to the American research firm Gartner, the carbon footprint of information and communications technology exceeded that of the global aviation industry for the first time in 2007.

As a web user, though, you can make a difference by visiting sites that offer end-to-end carbon neutrality and request that your favorite sites become greener too. Over the years, Internet users have become accustomed to demanding certain levels of service from the websites that they visit. It is now de rigueur for e-commerce sites to present badges certifying that their credit card processing systems are secure. Savvy users even know to watch for certification that sites they visit are safe from hacker attacks and that have audited privacy policies to protect their identities. A webmaster or blogger can affordably ensure that theirs is a [green website](#) too.

Over the past year, CO2Stats.com has stepped in to make websites greener in an auditable way. CO2Stats has developed extensive databases of statistics on global fuels mixes and computer energy consumption. In an effort to simplify the footprint management of a website, CO2Stats has wrapped up its work into a badge that webmasters can paste into their HTML code. Once inserted, the software automatically monitors and manages a website's emissions. Whenever the website is displayed, the badge code helps measure a variety of signals in order to ascertain both the amount and type of energy being produced to serve it up. The footprint data are then made publicly available on a certificate that can be seen by clicking on the badge. CO2Stats also identifies energy inefficiencies in the website and automatically purchases renewable energy from wind and solar farms to neutralize the site's carbon footprint.