Carbon Footprint
Best Foot Forward

What Is It?
It measures the impact that daily human activities have on the greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. A carbon footprint is measured in the units of carbon dioxide that our activities produce.

What Affects It?
The short answer is everything! Your primary foot-prints are the activities you directly control such as transportation, or the amount of electricity, gas, oil, and coal used in your home. Secondary footprints are activities that you indirectly control, such as resources used to create and deliver your clothes, food, etc.

How to Determine It?
It is almost impossible. There are a number of online calculators, but most will give you a different result. It is hard for these tools to gauge which activities affect an individual's carbon footprint the most.

How To Reduce It?
You already know to ditch the bottles and plastic bags. Here are 25 other easy things you can do now.

1. Use less paper: The paper industry is the third largest industrial contributor to global warming.
2. Use soy-based ink: They are also non-toxic.
3. Stop junk mail: The average adult gets around 41 pounds of junk mail a year. Start opting-out by going to donotmail.org and filling out a pre-addressed form to send to the major offenders.
4. Pay your bills online: Save money on envelopes and stamps.
5. Take shorter showers: Cutting just five minutes will decrease your carbon footprint over a year. Also, install a low-flow showerhead.
6. Use cold water: You will also save energy.
7. Sun dry your clothes: No more shrinking!
8. Buy secondhand: In most cases, it is also cheaper.
9. Fly less and take direct flights if possible: Traveling by train is ten times more energy efficient than flying. If you must, direct flights cut out the extra fuel used during takeoff and landing.
10. Switch to green energy: Contact your energy company for options.
11. Toss the microwave: Frozen dinners are not good for you anyway.
12. Plan your errands: Doing them all at once will save you time and unnecessary transportation usage.
13. Do not leave an empty roof rack on your car: It makes the car less aerodynamic and wastes gas.
14. Fill up your tires: It will improve your gas mileage by 3 percent, allowing you to save money and the environment at the same time.
15. Use natural light: Turn off those lights and open the curtains. This one is easy, unless you are a vampire.
16. If you are using the oven, make more than one dish in it: Planning efficient meals will also save on electricity and gas.
17. Use steel or glass in the kitchen: Stop buying plastic cook ware and storage containers.
18. Turn down the thermostat: Even two degrees makes a difference.
19. Reduce your meat intake: The resources to produce and supply meat are a major contributor to global warming.
20. Buy refills: You do not need to buy new containers of liquid soap, shampoo, and cleaning products.
21. Turn off your computer: Do not just put it in sleep mode.
22. Unplug appliances: Don't keep them plugged in when idle.
23. Avoid heavily packaged products: What is the point anyway?
24. Recycle your old electronics: Go to epa.gov to start e-cycling.
25. Encourage others to conserve: It is the one time it is okay to be annoying.

Sources: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Live Neutral, carbonfootprint.com, carboncounter.org