



LINK: [HTTPS://YALECLIMATECONNECTIONS.ORG/2022/01/SORTING-THINGS-OUT-GO-BIG-OR-SMALL-ON-CLIMATE-SOLUTIONS/](https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2022/01/sorting-things-out-go-big-or-small-on-climate-solutions/)

POLICY & POLITICS

# Sorting things out: Go 'big' or 'small' on climate solutions?

*Jumpstarting widespread efforts to tackle climate change challenges involves getting past 'either-or' options.*



by SUEELLEN CAMPBELL JANUARY 18, 2022



What can we do about climate change? To be effective, do we need to start and stay big? Or is it important and useful to start at home? Here are some excellent discussions of these options, the tensions between them, and ways to move beyond either-or.

Only going big counts:

- Morgan McFall-Johnsen, Business Insider, “The companies polluting the planet have spent millions to make you think carpooling and recycling will save us.”
- Rebecca Solnit, The Guardian, “Big oil coined ‘carbon footprints’ to blame us for their greed. Keep them on the hook.”

- Auden Schendler, New York Times, “Worrying about your carbon footprint is exactly what big oil wants you to do.” All three of these pieces derive from the role of BP in popularizing the concept of the personal carbon footprint. Schendler takes the argument further by focusing on corporate pledges to go “carbon neutral.” (The headline is inaccurate.) If you can, scan through the many letters in response, as they offer a good sample of both the strong and weak arguments in this debate.

Individual choices count:

- Tom Ptak, The Conversation, “The average person’s daily choices can still make a big difference in fighting climate change – and getting governments and utilities to tackle it, too.” This one has lots of links, mostly to academic studies.
- Jason Mark, Sierra, “Yes, actually, individual responsibility is essential to solving the climate crisis.”

Beyond the either-or:

- Ankur Shah, YouTube, “How to Transform Climate Anxiety into Climate Action.” This engaging and information-packed 11-minute video presents a five-option view of the “what to do” question and introduces high-quality resources to support all five.
- Emma Pattee, Mic, “Forget your carbon footprint. Let’s talk about your climate shadow.” This is a really productive way to frame the question differently.

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*This series is curated and written by retired Colorado State University English professor and close climate change watcher SueEllen Campbell of Colorado. To flag works you think warrant attention, send an e-mail to her any time. Let us hear from you.*

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