



LET'S TALK CLIMATE

A How-To Guide

4 simple tips to help friends and family
start talking about climate change.

Because we can't fix what we don't talk about.

You're here because you get it.

You know that the science on climate change is clear. You know it's happening — here and now. And you know we have to act TODAY if we're going to change course for our planet.

The good news is that you have a lot of company: 7 in 10 Americans believe climate change is real.

But, despite that, less than half of us talk about it with friends or family with any consistency.*

That's a big disconnect. Because we can't tackle the problem if we don't talk about it.

The Nature Conservancy created this guide to help get the conversation started. It's easy and can help show those around you that climate change isn't a niche issue — it's a real concern that everyone can help do something about.

Let's get started.

*Data from "Climate Change and the American Mind March 2018" from the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication

4 SIMPLE TIPS

for starting
the conversation

1. Meet people where they are.
2. Connection outweighs facts.
3. The goal is conversation, not conquest.
4. Focus on the person across from you.

*Read on to see how easy it is
to put each one in action.*

97% of scientists agree that climate change IS happening and is caused by human activity.

But see page 4 to learn why facts aren't the best way to have a real conversation.



TIP #1

Meet people where they are.

Start the conversation where the person you're talking to is on the subject — not where *you* are or where you think they *ought* to be.

If they're most concerned with hurricanes, start there. If they're interested in polar ice caps, that's fine too. If they want to talk jobs and family, that's also a good starting point.

It's important to listen to their perspective with patience and interest and not launch into a canned speech. Having a conversation with someone who's wrapped up in their own agenda and ignores what you're saying is frustrating for everyone involved.

Be with them in whatever place they are and begin your conversation there.

How do you find out what the person you're talking to thinks about climate change? Ask them:

- Have you noticed [world event/ weather/climate-related thing] — how do you think climate change impacted this?
- I've been thinking about [x] and that it's probably because of climate change. What do you think?
- Is [x thing that the person likes — fishing, travel, gardening, exercising outside] different for you because of changes in the climate?

Simply put, ask open-ended questions that are rooted in their experiences or your shared experiences with them.



TIP #2

Connection outweighs facts.

Science and the objective truth are important. But facts alone don't move hearts.

Studies show that people will ignore inconvenient facts in order to allow for the conclusion that they find more emotionally satisfying.

Connect your perspective to the values you share with the person you're talking with. It's this sense of shared identity, of connection, that makes what you say more impactful. Look for opportunities to find those connections on shared values and experiences.

People are also most open to acknowledging climate change when they observe its effects in local events — so point out growing season changes, storms, heat levels, etc. This is true even with climate skeptics.

Here are some ideas for drawing a connection and shared identity:

- *“Remember the beach our grandma loved to take us to? It’s just a sliver of what it used to be because the ocean’s gotten higher there.”*
- *“You have family in California. I’m sure all the uncontrollable wildfires there makes you scared for them.”*
- *“Last summer the summer camp we both sent our kids had to close because it was over 95 degrees for a whole week.”*
- *“You’re a generous person and the first one to make donations when there’s a hurricane or a flood. Don’t you think there are so many more extreme catastrophes like that in recent years?”*



TIP #3

The goal is conversation, not conquest.

A person rarely reverses a previously held opinion or makes a commitment to action before someone else's eyes. We usually like to present ourselves as firm in our convictions and try to avoid being “wrong” about something.

It can be tempting to keep pushing at it until the other person gives in on a topic like climate change. But this isn't a competition.

Be patient with the person you're talking to — understand that he or she may require more than one conversation to open up to what you're trying to say. The goal is to increase the amount of conversation, not to create converts or keep score.

People appreciate being heard.

Pay attention to how you're engaging and if you've slipped into rebutting too much, step back and say:

“I've been talking too much. I really want to hear more about what you think. Tell me more about why you feel [reference a point the person made].”



TIP #4

Focus on the person across from you.

And remember *they are a person*.

They have thoughts and feelings and needs just like you. You may not agree with their views, and some of their ideas may be factually incorrect. But anger or name calling never positively persuaded anyone of anything.

If you're confused about how they could do something or say something or think something, ask them. The answer might surprise you.

In a world where there is already more than enough combativeness, your commitment to simple humanity, compassion, respect and kindness will stand out.

Be aware and check yourself for:

- Interrupting
- Name calling or villainizing (either the person you're talking to or their ideas)
- Non-verbal cues that are insulting (like eye rolling)
- Raising your voice

**You're ready.
Now start with just one conversation.**

We know you can do it — it will make a big difference.

One recent study found that “second order beliefs”—
what we think OTHERS around us think about a
topic — are just as important to forming our beliefs
as any other factor.

Showing that climate change is important enough
for you to talk about will help change hearts and
minds. Plus, you'll make it easier for others around
you to talk about it as well.

THANK YOU for standing with The Nature
Conservancy and doing your part to tackle climate
change and help protect our one and only Earth.

TELL US HOW IT GOES

Help us learn more about how to best empower concerned people like you by sharing your experience talking about climate change.

[Sign up to be included in our follow-up research](#)

and a Nature Conservancy team member will be in touch by email to learn how your climate conversations have gone.

To support The Nature Conservancy's vital work putting the very best conservation science in action to take on the biggest challenges facing our planet today, donate online at **[nature.org/donate](https://www.nature.org/donate)**.

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