



How Emails Harm our Environment

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Each day, schools and offices rely on email to share news, files, and updates. Sending a message seems easy and green. It feels less wasteful than printing or traveling. However, every email sent or saved consumes energy. That energy comes from servers, internet services, and computers. Most power still comes from coal and gas. This means email contributes to carbon emissions. As we send more messages, its impact on nature grows. This issue is easy to overlook but important to address.

A short email can produce about 4 grams of carbon dioxide. One with a large attachment can generate 50 grams (Futura-Sciences, 2025; Melvin, 2015). With over 300 billion emails sent each day, the annual carbon footprint is equal to that of many industries (Futura-Sciences, 2025; SmartPandas, 2025). A report in The Guardian estimates that data use from emails, streaming, and cloud storage makes up a noticeable share of global carbon emissions (The Guardian, 2024).

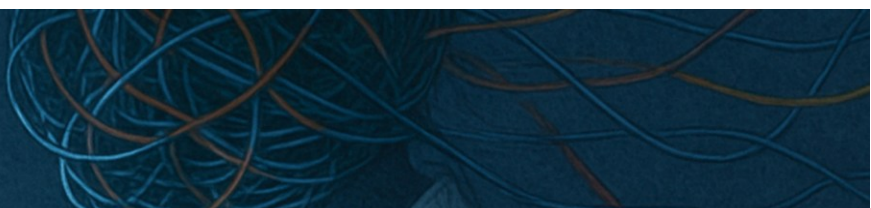
Every step of sending an email uses energy. The writer's computer, the network, data centers, and the reader's computer all draw power. Servers must run constantly and be cooled, which adds to energy use (Mailjet, 2024; Holmen, 2024). In the United Kingdom, data centers are expected to use over 6 percent of all electricity by 2030 (Times, 2025). Around the world, the internet contributes nearly 4 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, on par with the airline industry (SmartPandas, 2025).

The Philippines is starting to see the impact of digital emissions. Schools now have students and staff with hundreds of emails and attachments saved. Most inboxes are not cleared or managed. Unused files stay stored in the cloud and still consume power. Global research shows that idle emails and old files still draw energy as long as they remain online (The Guardian, 2024).

Spam and old emails also create a hidden problem. Unwanted emails make up a large portion of daily messages. McAfee reports that spam alone uses enough energy to power cities and emits 20 million tons of carbon dioxide every year (BBC Science Focus, 2020). This energy waste is preventable and simple to reduce.

Efforts like Digital Cleanup Day encourage people to clear old emails and reduce clutter. Cleaning out ten thousand emails can cut carbon emissions by around 39 kilograms a year (Carbon CalQlate, 2024). Schools and businesses could hold awareness campaigns. People can unsubscribe from lists, delete old messages, and share links rather than sending bulky attachments.

Institutions can also help reduce email emissions. They can create policies to limit unnecessary messages or discourage "reply all" responses. They can remind staff to delete old emails regularly and choose email services that use renewable energy. Simple ideas include sending reminders at the end of each term to clear inboxes and teaching students and workers how digital habits affect climate.



Emails are not harmless. They contribute to carbon emissions in a way that is silent but significant. Changing how we use email, deleting old messages, avoiding large attachments, and limiting unnecessary emails, schools and offices can help reduce their carbon footprint. These small changes will save energy and protect the environment. We all send and read emails. We can also make sure that this daily activity does not harm our planet.

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