# Mitigating Digital Pollution: Understanding Internet Use and Its Impact on Carbon Footprint



**Internet Use and Digital Carbon Footprint**

The internet and its digital infrastructure significantly contribute to global carbon emissions, comparable to the aviation sector. This happens because data generated by online activities such as sending emails, uploading photos, and using social media are processed in large, energy-consuming data centers worldwide. These centers often rely on coal-powered systems for cooling and maintaining stable operating temperatures.

Data centers, some as large as 600,000 square meters, like the one near Beijing, house computer servers that generate a substantial amount of heat. This waste heat is managed through energy-intensive air conditioning and chilled water systems.

Numerous personal actions can help minimize this digital carbon footprint:
1. **Think Before You Click:** Each online interaction travels through multiple electricity-intensive layers.
2. **Clear the Virtual Clutter:** Regularly deleting unnecessary emails, photos, and files can reduce data storage needs.
3. **Minimize Cloud Storage:** Storing data on external hard drives can be more energy-efficient than using cloud services extensively.
4. **Keep Devices Longer:** Extending the life of electronic devices and using refurbished gadgets helps reduce the environmental impact since manufacturing new devices is resource-intensive.

These individual efforts contribute to mitigating digital pollution, although experts like Dr. Jessica McLean of Macquarie University advocate for systemic changes and better regulation of digital industries to achieve significant environmental benefits.