

# KOMPETENZ ZENTRUM NACHHALTIGER KONSUM



## For practical use

### The Climate Scale

# The climate balance in use: Important information first

## What is the purpose of the climate scale?

The climate scale is a hands-on learning tool that helps people to understand the climate impact of everyday actions. It provides an answer to the question of what is important for more sustainability in everyday life. People engage in informal conversation, reflect on their own actions and, ideally, strengthen their climate awareness.

## How does the climate scale work?

The climate scale consists of a classic scale with two weighing pans and corresponding cans of different weights. Each box is assigned to a topic area (e.g. nutrition, mobility or housing) and represents the CO<sub>2</sub> savings of a specific everyday activity. For example, the “Install a low-flow shower head” can shows how much CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent you can save per year if you replace your shower head with a more economical alternative.

## How and where can the climate scale be used?

Thanks to the playful approach, trying out the climate scale makes abstract clear and tangible. No special prior knowledge is required. The hands-on can be used in different ways and with many different groups, for example:

- As a hands-on activity at an information stand or at exhibitions
- As a break activity for workshops or seminars
- Accompanying the teaching unit in school and extracurricular education according to the ESD guidelines incl. worksheets



## Where is the climate scale available?



The climate scale can already be borrowed free of charge at several locations throughout Germany. You can find a list of rental locations [here](#). Alternatively, you can create your own individual climate scale with the help of instructions.

## Is there a smaller alternative to the climate scale?

Same concept, practical to transport: the climate scale card game answers the same key question. The card set is a simplified, more compact and easier to transport version of the scale. It is particularly suitable for school and extracurricular education and can be ordered free of charge from the Federal Environment Agency's website.

# Can many light cans be weighed against one heavy can?

Subjectively, it can feel like many light doses of actions that you are already implementing can outweigh a heavy dose of an action that you have not (yet) integrated into your everyday life. Objectively, however, this is not the case.



This psychological phenomenon is referred to as “moral licensing”. This means that people can perform a bad, climate-damaging action without feeling guilty and have a clear conscience if they have previously performed a good, climate-friendly action.

Examples of arguments: “At home, I always separate my waste properly and drive an electric car. That means I can afford to fly on vacation once or twice a year.”

“I regularly go shopping with my friends. Sometimes a pair of fast-fashion jeans ends up in my shopping basket. However, I pay a lot of attention to organic food in my diet - strawberries in winter are a no-go for me.”

According to a graphic by A. Hoeben and T. Brudermann, actions with comparatively low CO2 savings potential are easy to implement, but bring little in comparison to another. A climate-impacting big point such as not flying, on the other hand, appears to be more difficult for some to comply with. Thus, “moral licensing” is a popular, unconscious mechanism for maintaining one's own environmentally harmful habits with a clear conscience.



Moralisches Lizenzieren klimaschädlicher Entscheidungen vs. Realität - A Hoeben & T Brudermann - klimapsychologie.com - CC-BY-ND.

# Using the climate scale: how it works

## 1. preparation is everything

Have one person supervise the scales so that discussions can develop and citizens have the opportunity to ask questions. We have put together two documents to help you. It is best to print out the two background papers and take them with you to the event. This way, you can look them up quickly if necessary. Alternatively, you can of course also use them digitally, e.g. on a tablet. In background paper 1, we have compiled answers to frequently asked questions about sustainable consumption, carbon footprint, handprint and life cycle assessments for you. In background paper 2, we have listed the exact calculation methods, assumptions and sources for all cans in detail - in case anyone wants to know exactly.

## 2. The right approach

Depending on the type of event and the number of participants, different tasks are possible. For more communication and guessing fun, it makes sense to first estimate the weight of the cans and then check them with the scales. Here are some sample tasks:

### Well suited for individuals:

- “On one side of the scales is can XY - which action do you think will save even more CO<sub>2</sub>?”
- “Pick out two cans with measures that you are already implementing successfully. Then find two cans with measures that you would like to implement in the future

### Well suited for groups:

- “Put the cans in the right order: from the lightest to the heaviest.”
- “Who will find the heaviest or lightest can first?”
- Pick out a particularly heavy can and form a pile of as many light cans as possible on the other side that match the weight.”
- “Everyone picks three cans. Who will save more CO<sub>2</sub> with their three actions?”

## 3. start a conversation

Ideally, a conversation will arise of its own accord through trial and error. The following questions can also stimulate a discussion:

- What is your core insight?
- What particularly surprised you?
- And finally: What are the levers with which we can achieve the greatest possible impact for climate protection?