

Reasons to use AI Less

AI comes with an energy cost:

The growth of AI comes with many implications for our society. One major implication is the large energy use. One single simple AI query can use 0.3 watt-hours of electricity, and AI images and videos are even more: a 5-second video can use more than 900 watt-hours of energy (~3,000 times a simple query). This [MIT Technology Review Article](#) from 2025 gives a good example project – if you were to do 15 AI text queries, make 10 AI images, and create three 5-second AI videos, that would consume ~2.9 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity.

That one project is enough energy to drive nearly 10 miles with an EV or run the microwave for 3.5 hours! If you did 50 projects like that every year, it would have the same energy impact as **living in your house for an extra week**. If everyone in the capital region did those 50 projects (~1 million people), that's like adding roughly **20,000 homes worth of energy every year**.

The problem is of course exacerbated by heavy users. Commercial users, running queries and making images or videos all day long, could easily reach an energy consumption of 50 kWh per day, or more energy than 2.5 average NY homes (~20 kWh per day in New York).

AI comes with a CO₂ cost:

This is a particular problem because data servers aren't typically located locally, and their energy use isn't on your own electricity bill. Using ChatGPT or Google AI to ask questions comes with an energy cost, but one we don't directly see. Data centers are chasing the cheapest power in the country or abroad, and cheap power is unfortunately usually dirty. Data centers have been found to be [48% more carbon intensive than the US average](#), and their typical 24/7 operation means they need power even when clean energy isn't producing electricity. The **upstate NY grid, by comparison, is 89% clean energy**. When we use AI servers (located out of state) for AI searches and videos, our carbon footprint only increases.

How to reduce your impact:

Turning off AI services in Gmail [can be done](#), but it also affects things such as spell check and autocorrect. Searching Google without the "AI Overview" is more difficult: Google itself allows you to use the "web" filter to remove the AI overview, but that's only **after doing the first google search (therefore increasing energy even more)**. Some claim that adding the characters "-ai" to a search can prevent the AI Overview from appearing, but that doesn't seem to work reliably. Other search options, such as Duck Duck Go, have a "No AI" search available, and is growing in popularity: <https://noai.duckduckgo.com/>

As always, the best way to reduce energy is to not consume it. Instead of saying "just google it", figure it out with a friend.