



## How to Use Ecolabels for Sustainable Shopping

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in

Each of us show our values through the volunteer work we do, the causes we support financially, and even in [the gear we buy](#). But how can you know for sure if a product has been manufactured in a way that is good for the environment?

A growing number of consumers want to live more sustainably, and companies are responding. A [2020 survey by Deloitte](#) found that 65% of respondents expected company CEOs to make progress on environmental and social issues like carbon emissions and air pollution. A [2021 report](#) found that 75% of millennials in the US are willing to pay more for an environmentally sustainable product.

### UNDERSTANDING WHICH LABELS MATTER

Terms such as "environmentally friendly," "eco safe," "all natural," or "green" may not tell the full story—for example, mercury is "all natural," but that doesn't make it safe for humans!

Instead of focusing on marketing buzzwords, look for credible [ecolabels](#), which help consumers quickly and easily identify those products that meet specific environmental performance criteria.

energy efficient appliances and smart way for the lowest-emitting passenger vehicles.



Additionally, [EPEAT](#) is recognized by the EPA as a leading ecolabel recognizing sustainable technology products and services including computers, cell phones, and

and end-of-life management. Search the [online registry](#) to learn about products that meet EPEAT standards.

## DIVING DEEPER INTO PRODUCTS

Thankfully, the internet makes it easier to access information about the products we buy. If you feel like a claim is too good to be true, double-check by reviewing the back of the label or visiting a company's website to see if the claims are backed up by third-party certifications.

If you come across a label you don't recognize, look it up in the [Ecolabel Index](#), the largest global directory of ecolabels that includes 455 ecolabels in 199 countries, and 25 industry sectors as of June 2022.

"Go green" while shopping by carefully choosing what you buy—and how much of it. Before you purchase something brand new, take a moment to [ask yourself](#):

Can you repair something you already own?

Do you really need the product?

Can you buy something reusable instead of disposable products?

Can you buy a service or rent a product rather than buying the product?

Can you buy a used product?





**42%** of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions are associated with the energy used to produce, process, transport, and dispose of our food and goods.

## Do You Really Need It?



### **Need something you don't use regularly?**

Borrow, rent, or share items that are used infrequently, like party decorations, tools, or furniture.

### **Maintain and repair things you already own,**

like clothing, furniture, and appliances, so they won't have to be thrown out and replaced as frequently.

## How "Green" Is It?

Companies can design their products to have as little environmental impact as possible. Keep an eye out for products that are designed with the environment in mind!



### **Does the company that makes your product have green values and practice sustainability?**

Do some research before buying! Some companies participate in EPA programs to help green their business practices, and others have eco-labels and standards to help consumers make the greener choice. [www.epa.gov/greenproducts](http://www.epa.gov/greenproducts)



### WaterSense

WaterSense labeled products are backed by independent certification, and they meet EPA's specifications for water efficiency and performance.



### Design for the Environment (DfE)

The Design for the Environment (DfE) label allows consumers to quickly identify and choose products that can help protect the environment and are safer for families.



#### Is it built to last?

The more durable a product is, the less likely you'll need to replace it.



#### Is it made of recycled materials and easily recyclable?

Check the label to see if the product is made from recycled materials and if it can be recycled. Buying products with recycled content encourages manufacturers to make more recycled-content products available.



#### Is it sustainable?

Consider buying sustainably and locally produced products, which may reduce environmental impacts and greenhouse gas emissions.



#### Is it more eco-friendly to buy your product in bulk?

If you use this product a lot, you could be reducing waste by buying your product in bulk instead of buying smaller, individual amounts.

### Buy reusable instead of disposable items.

For example, bring your own silverware and cups to lunch, rather than using disposable items.

Can You Reuse It?



**Can You Buy It Used?**

**Save money!**  
You can find everything from clothes to building materials at consignment shops and specialized reuse centers. Used items are often less expensive and just as good as new.

**EPA** United States Environmental Protection Agency  
EPAS30-F-14-004

For more information on what you can do to reduce, reuse, and recycle, please go to [www.epa.gov/recycle](http://www.epa.gov/recycle)

<sup>1</sup> Opportunities to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions through Materials and Land Management Practices (PDF)  
[http://www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/ghg\\_land\\_and\\_materials\\_management.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/oswer/docs/ghg_land_and_materials_management.pdf)

## PUTTING CORPORATE VALUES INTO PRACTICE

Understanding [corporate social responsibility \(CSR\)](#) can help you support companies that are aligned with your personal values. Companies and individuals can also help achieve workplace sustainability goals by partnering with NEEF on an [employee engagement campaign](#). Not only will it help make a positive impact on the environment, but [studies show that engaging employees](#) in their company's sustainability work increases both job satisfaction and retention.

[Contact NEEF today](#) to learn more about how we can work together to develop an employee engagement campaign that fits your organization's needs.

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