



# SUSTAINABLE BUYER'S GUIDE WITH TERMS



# INTRODUCTION

We are committed to providing high-quality promotional products while ensuring our practices positively impact the environment and society. Our goal is to help you make informed choices and understand the importance of sustainability in branded merchandise.

We are a Certified B Corporation which means we have been audited to a global standard on the following areas: Governance, Community, Environment, Customers, and Workers. You can find out more about the B Corp Movement [here](#).



There is a lot of information on sustainability so we wanted to summarize here for you what we are doing and how it helps. We look to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) as a widely accepted resource around the world. You will find targets, events and actions outlined in a clear (and graphic) way. We went so far as to map all of our products and suppliers against the UN SDG's so we can provide an impact report to our clients on your purchase. Yes, this is unique to us. Please reach out if you want more information. You can find more information on the SDG's [here](#).

We want this document to be a resource to you so we have compiled information that summarizes many terms used, what sustainability means to us in our industry and what our Pillars are at Ethical Swag. It is important to note that sustainability is more than the environment and at Ethical Swag, the social aspects of sustainability are just as important. By purchasing your corporate merchandise through us, you are amplifying your impact globally. Thanks for coming on this journey with us.

# THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

We recommend choosing products that are reusable, recyclable, or compostable to minimize environmental pollution. Eco-friendly, durable, and high-quality items are more likely to be used repeatedly instead of being thrown away. This is great for your brand, your budget, and our planet!

Consider alternatives to hard to recycle products that are multilayered, composite and mixed. Products that can be disassembled end up in waste streams less often. Products that can be recycled curbside are better. Here is a handy guide:

- Products made from one material are preferred. When items contain multiple materials that can't be separated, they can't be curbside recycled. Metal is better for recycling
- Paper, wood and cardboard can easily be recycled curbside
- Black plastic can be harder to recycle and in many places, not accepted at all

When you choose products with recycled content, you help to reduce waste sent to landfills and/or incinerators. Recycled content can include pre-consumer (typically scraps from making new products) or post-consumer (content that has been used and gone back into the recycling system).

FSC-certified bamboo lid

100% recycled plastic body

1% sales to nonprofit environmental causes



You can choose products that are compostable as these are more earth friendly. Products to consider include:

- Wood
- Bamboo
- Hemp
- Jute
- Cork
- Wheat Straw
- Cotton
- Soy

We love products that can be reused! We outline below various ways products can be reused to avoid them ending up in landfill.

# THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS

## Apparel:

- Can it be repaired? We encourage you to choose quality over quantity.
- Do you know how much you will need? Can you do “choice based” (we can help with that!) to avoid waste. We want to work with you to avoid over-purchasing.
- We only recommend sustainable choices including certifying how the garments are made and by who.
- Remember you can donate or recycle if earth friendly choices are made upfront. This means choosing natural fibres like cotton.



## Packaging:

- We work with our suppliers and encourage them to use recyclable materials, reuse boxes, use biodegradable materials and minimize packaging as much as possible. This can be a fine balance because if your products arrive damaged, they end up in the landfill!



## Plastic Waste

- Avoid single use
- Recycle wherever possible
- Upcycle items or donate them
- Check your local recycling guidelines
- Also learn about bioplastics and compostable plastics [here](#)



## Electronic Waste

- Find opportunities for reuse
- Donate used electronics
- Return to e-waste drop-off facilities for recycling



# TERM GUIDE



# TERM GUIDE

**End of Use** - The stage in a product's life cycle when it is no longer used for its intended purpose and requires disposal, recycling, or repurposing.

**Recycled** - Materials or products that have been reprocessed from recovered waste materials, reducing the need for virgin resources. Recycling reduces the need for raw materials but the challenge is raw materials are often cheaper.

It is important to understand the difference with recycled materials:

**Post-Consumer Content:** Truly recycled materials

**Pre-Consumer Content:** Consists of scraps and rejects tossed out by the manufacturer.

**Organic** - Products made from materials grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs), ensuring a more sustainable and eco-friendly production process.

**Greenwashing** - A deceptive practice where a company falsely claims or exaggerates its environmental efforts to appear more sustainable than it actually is.

**Biodegradable** - Products or materials that can be broken down by natural processes and microorganisms, reducing environmental impact.

**Compostable** - Compostable refers to a material that can break down into natural elements in a compost environment, resulting in nutrient-rich soil. This process typically requires the presence



# TERM GUIDE



of microorganisms, heat, and moisture, and should occur within a specific time frame under controlled conditions.

- Re-Earth Compostable: Products that are specifically manufactured to break down in a compost system at the end of its useful life.
  - Questions to ask: Does the material come from nature? Will it easily decompose without the aid of industrial-strength composting facilities?
  - Bioplastics are progressing but they need high temperature industrial composting facilities to break them down.

**Bio-based plastic** – Refers to plastics made not from fossil fuel building blocks but from plant material, such as corn, sugar beets or potato starch. Bio-based plastics only represent about 1% of the plastics available on the market. Though research is underway to increase the amount of bio-based material, currently most bio-based plastic is still partially composed of fossil-based plastic. For example, the NaturALL bottle used by major beverage companies is currently 30% bio-based plastic, and 70% fossil-based plastic. Source: [BeyondPlastics](#)

**Compostable plastic** – Is engineered to fully decompose (as opposed to breaking into smaller and smaller fragments the way most plastics do over time) under certain conditions that can typically be met only in an industrial composting facility, something that few cities and even fewer towns have. Otherwise, they are likely to persist in the environment for years before breaking into

# TERM GUIDE

problematic microplastics, just like any conventional plastic does. Source: [BeyondPlastics](#)

**Electronic Waste** - E Waste has been identified as the fastest growing waste stream. There is significant environmental harm because it is not biodegradable, its toxic and accumulates in the environment. Less than 20% of e-waste is formally recycled.

**Zero Waste** - Zero Waste is a philosophy and lifestyle aimed at reducing the amount of trash sent to landfills and incinerators to nearly zero. It emphasizes the redesign of resource life cycles so that all products are reused, repaired, recycled, or composted, minimizing waste and maximizing sustainability.

**Carbon Footprint** - The total amount of greenhouse gases produced directly or indirectly by an individual, organization, event, or product; typically measured in units of carbon dioxide equivalents.

**Climate Change** - Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns, mainly caused by human activities like burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes. These changes can lead to more extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and other environmental impacts.

**Waste Diversion** - Waste diversion is the process of redirecting waste away from landfills and incineration to other more sustainable options like recycling, composting, or repurposing. The goal is to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in



# TERM GUIDE



landfills, conserving resources and minimizing environmental impact. Examples include recycling, repurposing, reusing, refusing, zero waste and composting.

## **Scope 1, 2 and 3 Emissions**

1. Scope 1 covers emissions from sources that an organization owns or controls directly – for example from burning fuel in our fleet of vehicles (if they're not electrically-powered)
2. Scope 2 are emissions that a company causes indirectly and come from where the energy it purchases and uses is produced. For example, the emissions caused when generating the electricity that we use in our buildings would fall into this category.
3. Scope 3 encompasses emissions that are not produced by the company itself and are not the result of activities from assets owned or controlled by them, but by those that it's indirectly responsible for up and down its value chain. An example of this is when we buy, use and dispose of products from suppliers. Scope 3 emissions include all sources not within the scope 1 and 2 boundaries.

## **Linear Economy - Take - Make - Consume - Dispose**

We extract the resources from the planet, we manufacture them into something, we consume these products and then they turn to waste.

# TERM GUIDE

## **Circular Economy - Made to be made again**

A circular economy is an economic system aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of resources. It involves reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products to create a closed-loop system, minimizing the need for new resources and reducing environmental impact.

## **Net Zero**

Net zero refers to achieving a balance between the amount of greenhouse gasses emitted into the atmosphere and the amount removed. This is done by reducing emissions and offsetting any remaining emissions through actions like planting trees or investing in renewable energy.

## **PETE (Polyethylene Terephthalate) PET**

PETE, or PET, is a type of plastic commonly used for packaging foods and beverages, especially soft drinks, juices, and water. It is known for being lightweight, strong, and shatter-resistant. PETE is highly recyclable and is often transformed into products like clothing, carpets, and new containers.

## **PP5 (Polypropylene)**

PP5, or Polypropylene, is a versatile plastic used in a variety of applications, including food containers, medicine bottles, and automotive parts. It is known for its durability, heat resistance, and chemical resistance. PP5 can be recycled, but it is less commonly recycled than other types of plastics.



# TERM GUIDE



## **HDPE (High-Density Polyethylene)**

HDPE is a strong, durable plastic commonly used for items like milk jugs, detergent bottles, and plastic bags. It is resistant to impact, chemicals, and moisture, making it ideal for packaging and containers. HDPE is easily recyclable and can be turned into products like pipes, plastic lumber, and new containers.

For more information about our sustainability efforts or to discuss how we can help you achieve your sustainability goals with our products, please contact us at [info@ethicalswag.com](mailto:info@ethicalswag.com)

By incorporating these elements, our Sustainability document aims to be a valuable resource for visitors, providing clear and concise information about our commitment to sustainability. We hope this page not only informs but also inspires action towards a more sustainable future.

# Understanding Our Emoji Ratings

We label our products with emojis to help you find those that best align with your company values. Below is the guide so you can best understand what they mean.

😊 Good: cost competitive, comparable to other products on the market but sourced from suppliers who have passed 3rd party audits on social compliance and environmental impact.

😊😊 Better: always cost competitive and have some sustainable features (recycled content, material made from rapidly renewed resource, biodegradable, etc.)

😊😊😊 Best: when possible, sourced as closely as possible to end client (North American made), preferred use of sustainable material, third party accreditation, and/or supplier is Certified B Corporation and/or supplier has significant audited giving projects, etc. Product quality is very high AND it is still cost competitive.

👩 = Made by a **women-owned** business

👤 = Made by a company which supports **social causes**

👥 = Made by a company in which the employees are **unionized**

❤️ = Made by a **black-owned** business

👦 = Made by an **indigenous-owned** business

👤 = Made by a **refugee-owned** business

🐝 = Made by a **Certified B Corporation**

🐟 = Made by a company which supports **environmental causes**

🍏 = Made with **certified organic** materials

♻️ = Made with **recycled** materials

🌱 = Made with **biodegradable** materials

🐰 = Made with **vegan** materials or ingredients; **cruelty-free**, no animal testing.

🍁 = Made in Canada

★ = Made in the USA

Don't hesitate to contact us if you require more information on the product's environmental stewardship, social compliance, or quality certifications.