HOW CAN I GO ECO?

RESOURCES

source
ONLINE INTERIOR TRAINING

PLASTIC RECYCLING SYMBOLS

KNOW YOUR PLASTICS

- Recyclable plastic usually has a little triangular recycling symbol printed on the bottom, with a number from 1 to 7 stamped in the centre.
- This number helps recycling plants sort materials and it also helps recycling collectors determine what items they can accept - and which ones enter the general waste system.
- The numbers are valuable to us because they spell out the likelihood of our plastics ending up in landfill and then making their way into our food and water supply, in one form or another.
- Symbols 1 and 2 are widely recycled. Symbols 4 and 5 are becoming more commonly recycled, check with your local facility.
- Symbols 3, 6 and 7 are rarely recycled. Try to avoid buying these types of plastic.

01 PET	POLYETHYLENE TEREPHTALATE PET or PETE is widely recycled and picked up by most curbside recycling programs. This type of plastic is usually clear in colour and not intended for multiple uses. It is generally used for water and soft drink bottles, salad dressing containers, microwavable food trays, mouthwash bottles, food jars and clothes fibre. It can be recycled into carpet, fleece clothing, or to stuff sleeping bags, jackets and pillows.
02 HDPE	HIGH DENSITY POLYETHYLENE Plastic No. 2 is typically opaque, and is picked up by most curbside recycling programs. This plastic forms milk and juice jugs, laundry detergent, shampoo and toiletry bottles, yogurt and butter tubs and motor oil bottles. These are heavier containers that can be recycled into the same new containers. Coloured HDPE is turned into toys, pens, lumber, floor tiles and recycling containers, to name a few.
03 PVC	POLYVINYLCHLORIDE The most toxic plastic, leaching phtalates, carcinogens, dioxins and more linked to reproductive problems, diabetes, organ toxicity and cancers. Items made of PVC plastic are difficult to recycle and will likely not be accepted at your local recycling centre. It is best know for its use in pipes, but it also appears in cooking oil and shampoo bottles, medical tubing, building materials, shower curtains and window cleaner spray bottles. PVC plastic recycling is almost impossible because of its different additives.
04 LDPE	LOW DENSITY POLYETHYLENE Most recycling centres do not accept plastic No. 4, although more are starting to now. It is found in most squeezable bottles and toys, but it is mostly used in plastic films, shopping bags, sandwich or zip-loc bags, dry cleaning, bread and produce bags. This plastic is recycled into compost bins, bin bags, floor tiles and shipping envelopes.

	POLYPROPYLENE Increasingly becoming accepted by curbside recycling programs. PP has a high melting point that makes it suitable for hot liquids. Ketchup, syrup, medicine bottles and yoghurt pots all use plastic No. 5, but you'll also find it in dishwasher safe cups and bowls, baby bottles, disposable nappies, bottle caps and straws. Polypropylene can be recycled into brooms, car battery cases, pallets, signal lights, ice scrapers and bicycle racks. Makers of electronic packaging are increasing using the recycled PP material instead of toxic PVC.
	POLYSTYRENE Polystyrene is not recyclable and should be avoided. Some common items are take-away food containers, meat trays, disposable plates and cutlery, packing peanuts, and insulation, including building insulation. The problem with plastic No. 6 is its fragility - it breaks up easily and goes to the environment.
	BISPHENOL A AND OTHERS Plastic No. 7 will not be picked up by curbside recycling programmes. No long fancy name for this plastic. It is a kind of miscellaneous category for everything that doesn't fit into the last six slots. Think oven-baking bags, 3 and 5 gallon office water refill bottles, car parts, medical and dental equipment, electrical wiring and lids. It's hard to recycle 7 plastic and most factories do not accept it.

RECYCLING SYMBOLS EXPLAINED

READING LABELS

The following labels appear on all sorts of packaging, such as soft drink cans, bread bags and plastic toiletry bottles, to name a few. They help us identify how different types of packaging can be recycled.

SEPARATE YOUR PACKAGING

The label tells you which part of the packaging it refers to (box / bottle) and the material it consists of (cardboard / glass), helping you easily separate your packaging into recyclables and non-recyclables.

CAPABLE OF BEING RECYCLED

This symbol indicates that the packaging is capable of being recycled. It does not guarantee that the material will be accepted by your local recycling centre or collection. You will sometimes see this symbol used with a percentage figure in the middle- this means that the packaging contains x% of recycled material.

CONTRIBUTION TO RECYCLING

This dot does not mean that the packaging is recycled or recyclable. It shows that the producer has financially contributed to the recovery and recycling of packaging in Europe.

RECYCLE GLASS

The majority of glass is recyclable if you are depositing your glass bottles or jars at a bottle bank, remember to separate the glass by colour and remove any non-glass components like bottle tops and lids.

MADE FROM RECYCLABLE ALUMINIUM

This logo lets you know that this product is made from recyclable aluminium.

INDUSTRIALLY COMPOSTABLE

This symbol means that the item has been certified as industrially compostable within Europe. However, do not put compostable plastic into your recycling bin- it cannot be recycled and contaminates recyclable plastics.

FROM WELL MANAGED FORESTS

This is the Forest Stewardship Council logo. It identifies wood-based products such as paper and card, from well managed forests, in accordance with the rules of the FSC.

FAKE CLAIMS

BUYER BEWARE

Green, sustainable living is big business right now and everyone wants in on the action. Supermarket shelves are full of cleaning chemicals. Every brand using bold claims, deals and bright colours to grab our attention. But not all cleaning products that claim to be eco-friendly actually are.

BIODEGRADABLE

Most detergents are not fully biodegradable (breakdown easily in nature). Unscrupulous manufacturers can advertise an item as biodegradable when only a very small percentage of it is. Always check the percentage biodegradability before you buy. The higher the better!

CHEMICAL FREE

This is a fake, misleading claim that makes no sense, as everything is made up of chemicals.

ECO-FRIENDLY

The product looks eco-friendly. It says it's eco-friendly. But is it really? Chemicals and detergents can never be 'eco-friendly', they can only show a minimal impact on health and the environment.

100% ECO-FRIENDLY

This is a marketing design. Not an official certification. Examine the packaging and labelling thoroughly. What other information is there to back up this claim? If you can't find anything, put it back on the shelf.

GREEN

'Green' is not a regulated term, it is used for products or services with a supposed low environmental impact. Manufacturers know we associate 'green' with eco-friendly, so they exploit this in their marketing.

NATURAL

'Natural' is not a regulated term.

NON-TOXIC

Not poisonous and does not contain poisonous substances. A dubious claim, as in the EU, toxic ingredients are already prohibited by law.

PACKAGING IMAGES

It's hard to spot a real eco-friendly product. Packaging can be deceiving. Clever marketing tricks allude to nature: trees, leaves and lots of use of the colour green. Some might create their own check marks or stamps of authority. Don't be fooled. Look for real certification and avoid the fakes.

TRUSTED CERTIFICATION

If you need further backup that a cleaning product or manufacturer is truly eco, look out for 3rd party certification on the packaging. Certification societies such as the ones below exist all over the world. Do your research, find out who is certifying eco-friendly cleaning products in your part of the planet and try to choose only those.

ECOLABEL

Established in 1992 and recognised across Europe and worldwide, the EU Ecolabel is a label of environmental excellence that is awarded to products and services meeting high environmental standards throughout their life-cycle: from raw material extraction, to production, distribution and disposal.

www.ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/eu-ecolabel-for-consumers.html

GREEN SEAL

Founded in 1989, the Green Seal certification mark is a universal symbol that a product or service meets the highest benchmark of health and environmental leadership. Green Seal has rigorous standards for health, sustainability and product performance.

www.greenseal.org

THE NORDIC SWAN ECOLABEL

The Nordic Swan Ecolabel was established in 1989 by the Nordic Council of Ministers as a voluntary ecolabelling scheme for the Nordic countries Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Nordic Swan works to reduce the environmental impact from production and consumption of goods.

www.nordic-ecolabel.org

CRADLE TO CRADLE

Cradle to Cradle Certified is a globally recognized measure of safer, more sustainable products made for the circular economy. To receive certification, products are assessed for environmental and social performance across five critical sustainability categories: material health, material reuse, renewable energy and carbon management, water stewardship, and social fairness.

www.c2ccertified.org

LET'S INVESTIGATE

Do your research to find out about the 4 lifecycle stages that contribute to an eco-friendly cleaning product.

1

INGREDIENTS

Are the ingredients used plant-based or man-made?

2

PRODUCTION

Is the energy and water used in production from renewable sources? How is waste disposed of?

3

PACKAGING

Is the packaging made from recycled materials? And can you recycle it at the end of its life?

4

DISTRIBUTION

How is the manufacturer reducing their carbon footprint?

HAZARD SYMBOLS AND THEIR MEANINGS

	Indicates that the chemical can cause immediate or delayed danger to the environment with long last effects.
	Indicates that the substance or its fumes pose a risk of fire if they come into contact with air, water, heat, flames, or sparks.
	Indicates that the chemical can react to cause a fire, intensify a fire, or cause an explosion.
	Indicates that the substance can damage health if it is swallowed, inhaled, or comes into contact with the skin or eyes.
	Indicates that the substance can be toxic and even fatal if swallowed, inhaled or if it comes into contact with the skin.
	Indicates a risk of serious and long-term damage to health and even death if it is swallowed or enters the airways.
	Indicates that the substance can be corrosive to metal and cause severe skin or eye damage on contact.
	Indicates a risk of explosion if the container is heated or punctured.
	Indicates gas under pressure which can explode if exposed to heat, or it can indicate refrigerated gas which can cause cold burns or injury.

GLOSSARY

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Aquatic toxicity	The level of toxicity which doesn't harm aquatic life in water courses, seas and oceans. Detergents should show a low aquatic toxicity.
Biodegradability	A term to indicate that materials and chemicals are biodegradable, and to which extent they are; more specifically used with cleaning chemicals. This applies only to the group of chemicals called surfactants (10-30% of the product).
Biodegradable	The capacity of a substance to be decomposed by bacteria and other living organisms into single chemical elements (sodium, silicates, etc.), and water, thereby avoiding pollution.
Biodegradable product	There is no obligation for any complete detergent to be biodegradable; legally, only surfactants must be biodegradable (minimum 60% in 28 days).
Biosphere	The zone of life on earth, a combination of all ecosystems.
Carbon footprint	The total amount of greenhouse gas released into the atmosphere as a result of an individual or company's activities, for example: driving or flying, manufacturing clothes, food, equipment, etc.
Carcinogenic	Having the potential to cause or trigger cancer.
Chemical (substance)	A form of matter with constant chemical composition and specific characteristics. Liquid and steam are two forms of the (pure) chemical 'water'. The term 'chemical' is not equal to 'bad' or 'dangerous'.
Chemical free	This is a fake, misleading claim that makes no sense, as everything is made up of chemicals.
Conscience	Our personal sense of right and wrong, which acts as a guide to our behaviour.
Detergent	An unspecified cleaning or washing product, mostly one or more surfactants combined with one or more supporting materials, relative to the surfaces to be cleaned.
Eco-friendly	Ants and grass could perhaps be named 'eco-friendly', they have a specific role in the ecosystems. But chemicals and detergents can never be 'eco-friendly', they can only show a minimal impact on health and environment. Better not to use it.
Ecosystem	An ecosystem or ecological system, is a community of living organisms in combination with the non-living components of their environment (e.g. minerals). Ecosystems are interdependent and act as an organism.
Fake claim	A claim that is baseless and cannot be supported or verified.
Fossil	A material which is a leftover from former life forms on the planet. The fossil world is a non-renewable resource, we should use it as little as possible.
Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN)	An internationally recognised non-profit association of leading ecolabelling organisations. According to its website, it promotes and develops the ecolabelling of products and services with a lesser impact on the environment.
'Green'	'Green' is a non-regulated term for products or services with a supposed low environmental impact. Not credible without supporting data and/or proof.
Greenhouse gas	Gases within the Earth's atmosphere that trap heat. They let sunlight pass through the atmosphere, but they prevent the heat that the sunlight brings, from leaving the atmosphere. The main greenhouse gases are: water vapour and carbon dioxide.

GLOSSARY

TERM	DESCRIPTION
ISO 14024	An international standard that establishes principles and procedures for ecolabels and certifications.
Mineral resources	Resources that are part of the earth's crust, taken from mining. Minerals derived from them are non-renewable, but they are chemical elements and cannot be destroyed. Some minerals are quite rare and should not be used for products.
Mutagenic	A material able to change the natural structure of living cells; often seen as a precursor to cancer.
Natural resources	Global resources that exist in the world without the input of humans; they can be renewable or non-renewable.
Natural	Existing in, or extracted from living nature by physical processes only (pressing, crushing, grinding), not made or modified by humans.
Naturally derived	Ingredients derived from natural resources.
Non-toxic	Not poisonous and does not contain poisonous substances. A dubious claim, as in the EU toxic ingredients are already prohibited by law.
Offset carbon footprint	The idea is that the carbon emissions released into the atmosphere through an activity (such as a manufacturing factory) can be calculated, and then the equivalent 'paid off ' by financial investment into a scheme such as tree planting, which over time removes carbon from the atmosphere.
Petroleum-based ingredients	Petroleum is derived from crude oil, a fossil ingredient found beneath the earth's surface.
Plant-based ingredients	Plant-based ingredients are renewable; plants and animals can regrow, fossil and mineral materials cannot. Many plant-based ingredients are readily biodegradable.
Recyclable	A material or object that can be collected and processed for another use, for a similar or different purpose.
Recycled	A material or product that has been used before and then put through a process so that it can make a new material or product.
Renewable ingredients	The ingredient is derived from a renewable source, e.g. plant or animal-based. Fossil and mineral ingredients are not renewable.
Renewable resources	Sources that do not run out because their elements can be regrown or are naturally replaced, e.g. plants and animals. Renewable resources are the basic resource of raw materials for mankind.
Surfactant	A man-made product, mainly based on oil but water soluble, which reduces the surface tension of a liquid. In doing so it enables the ingredients to clean better. Surfactants are the workhorses of detergents.
Surface tension	A physical phenomenon that allows oil to float on water, and prevents frogs and fishes from drowning. Surfactants in detergents can lower the surface tension of water and allow the easy removal of oil and grease.
Sustainability	A body of understanding that allows the biosphere and human civilisation to co-exist into the future.
Sustainable	Is said about a material or a process that respects the principles of sustainability; maintain its natural resources and avoid jeopardizing the ability for future generations to meet their needs.
Synthetic ingredients	Man-made ingredients, in this context, mainly from fossil sources.

GLOSSARY

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Teratogenic	A material able to generate the growth of tumours.
Third-party certification	An independent body or organisation has reviewed a cleaning ingredient or process and has independently determined that the product or process meets certain standards, e.g. performance or renewability.
Toxic Free	A non-regulated term to say a product has been created without the use of any potentially toxic, carcinogenic, teratogenic or mutagenic ingredients. A dubious claim, as in the EU toxic ingredients are already prohibited by law.
Unethical	Not conforming to approved standards of human rights or social or professional behaviour.
Virgin plastic	Plastic that has never been used, as opposed to recycled plastic.