

## Sustainability Glossary of Terms



**Abaca:** Abaca is a species of banana plant. Abaca's large leaves and stems are harvested for its fiber, and used in making clothing and textile goods. A sustainable alternative to cotton.

**Air Pollution:** Airborne contaminants or pollutants that adversely affect the environment or human health. A byproduct of the manufacturing process and transportation of goods. Buying eco-friendly products indirectly reduces air pollution.

**Antique:** In furniture and home furnishings, a collectible piece typically should be at least 100 years old to be considered antique. Antiques help foster an appreciation for quality, durability, and longevity in design by presenting an alternative to the mentality of throwaway culture. See also Vintage.

**Bamboo:** An alternative to wood. Generally, bamboo is more renewable than wood because it is a fast-growing grass/reed. Care should still be taken when shopping for bamboo products because many cheaply made bamboo items are coated with toxic finishes. Look for natural, food-safe coatings for tabletop items, and certified organic bamboo labels.

**Biodegradable:** A material or substance which will decompose quickly and without harmful effects to the environment, when left exposed to nature.

**Carbon Footprint:** The total amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases emitted over the full lifecycle of a product or service, expressed as grams of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents. Greenhouse gases contribute to global warming and climate change, so reducing carbon footprints is desirable for a healthier earth.

**Carbon Offset:** Carbon offsetting is the act of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions through emissions trading. For example, a factory or production facility may not be able to reduce its own carbon footprint any further through its own actions, so it may voluntarily purchase credits for another party to offset their actions. The goal of carbon offsets is to attain a carbon neutral overall effect.

**Certified:** Acknowledging that a product is genuine to what it claims, typically having gone through a process similar to obtaining a license.

**Certified Wood:** Under the guidance of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), wood-based materials used in building construction that are supplied from sources that comply with sustainable forestry practices, protecting trees, wildlife habitat, streams and soil.

**Construction Waste Management Plan (CWMP):** A plan that diverts construction debris from landfills through conscientious plans to recycle, salvage, and reuse. For best results, this type of plan should also eliminate packaging of materials when possible and be carefully monitored or audited by the contractor.

**Co-op: Short for Co-operative.** Worker cooperatives are owned and democratically controlled by its workers. Since the co-op is worker-owned and membership is not compulsory, this type of manufacturing set-up avoids exploitation of its workers.

**Cottage Industry:** An industry in which the creation and services of products is home based and not factory based. The products produced are often independent, and one of a kind and not mass produced.

**DIY: Do-It-Yourself.** Creating things yourself without the help of professionals. A mentality that often goes hand-in-hand with recycling and conserving resources.

**Durability:** Related to the quality of an item, durability indicated how well a product stands up after a sustained period of use.

**Eco-chic:** A product or good that is both eco-friendly and hip.

**Eco-friendly:** An alternative to goods usually bought in most stores. These products are made with ecology and the environment in mind.

**Emissions:** Emissions are particles and gases released into the air as byproducts. There are many types of emissions. Greenhouse gas emissions, for example, contribute to global warming and is not sustainable to the health of the earth.

**Energy Efficient:** Products and systems that use less energy to perform as well or better than standard products. While energy-efficient products sometimes have higher up-front costs, they tend to cost less over their lifetime when the cost of energy consumed is factored in. An example of this is fluorescent light bulbs vs. incandescent bulbs.

**Fair Trade:** A social movement that promotes standards for international labor and gives workers a sense of economic self sufficiency through fair wages and good employment opportunities to economically disadvantaged populations.

**Flat-pack:** Refers to furniture that is designed to pack flat, thereby reducing shipping costs and fuel used in transportation. Flat-pak designs are ready to assemble by the customer, right out of the box.

**Forestry Stewardship Council:** The Forestry Stewardship Council is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests. FSC-labeled wood products indicate that the wood is harvested from sustainably-managed forests.

**FTF:** Fair Trade Federation. An association of fair trade wholesalers, retailers and producers that adhere to social criteria and environmental principles that foster a more equitable and sustainable system of production and trade.

**FSC:** See Forestry Stewardship Council. FSC-labeled wood products indicate that the wood is harvested from sustainably-managed forests.

**Good Design:** A phrase often associated with ideals of Modern Design. Good design traditionally sought to maximize function with form and strived to produce high-quality goods that were democratically available to the masses. Good design also encompasses design that has social and environmental integrity.

**Green Building:** A green building is designed to conserve resources and reduce negative impacts on the environment - whether it is energy, water, building materials or land. Compared to conventional construction, green buildings may use one or more renewable energy systems for heating and cooling, such as solar electric, solar hot water, geothermal, bio mass, or any combination of these.

**Green Design:** A term used in the building, furnishings, and product industries to indicate design sensitive to environmentally-friendly, ecological issues.

**Greenwashing:** Greenwashing is a superficial nod to the environment that marketers and businesses that historically were not interested in sustainable concerns, are doing in order to improve their public relation standings with the consumer or public. Analogous to brainwashing. Don't be fooled by dishonest companies employing greenwashing techniques.

**Going Green:** A phrase referring to individual action that a person can consciously take to curb harmful effects on the environment through consumer habits, behavior, and lifestyle.

**Handmade:** Usually a one of a kind, hand-crafted product that is made without the use of machines and is not mass produced. The cost of handmade goods are often higher than machine-made versions if artisans are paid a fair wage and have pride in their craft.

**Hybrid:** A car that runs on both electric battery and fuel, making the gas mileage extremely efficient and also produces fewer emissions which help control pollution in the environment.

**LEED:** Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. A leading certification process by the U.S. Green Building Council that evaluates new buildings constructed to common green standards.

**Low-VOC:** A term referring to reduced amounts of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in paint and finishes. Low-VOC paints do not off-gas as much as conventional paints and contain less toxins that are harmful to the environment.

**Modernist:** An individual of Modern thought. Modernists are often considered to be both progressive and optimistic in the belief that human beings can create, improve, and reshape their environment.

**Multi-functional:** Something that serves more than one purpose.

**Natural:** A product that is made from materials and ingredients found in nature, with little or no human intervention. For example, wood is a natural material while plastic is not.

**Non-toxic:** Something that is not toxic or poisonous.

**Organic:** Of or relating to a product that is solely made from plants or insects. Organic materials and products often carry certifications according to industry.

**Pollution Prevention:** Reducing the amount of energy, materials, packaging, or water in the design, manufacturing, or purchasing of products or materials in an effort to increase efficient use of resources, reduce toxicity, and eliminate waste.

**Post-consumer:** Refers to recycled material that was used first by a consumer. A high post-consumer content helps divert materials from ending up in landfills.

**Pre-consumer:** Refers to recycled material that came from the manufacturing process. Pre-consumer recycling of scraps and discards diverts waste that may otherwise end up in landfills, and reduces use of raw materials.

**Recyclable:** A product or material that can be converted back into material that can be used again in manufacturing new goods. Typically, recyclable materials (aluminum, steel, paper, etc.) must remain in their pure form. If too many adhesives are used, or a product is made from a composite, those materials may not be separated at the end of its life-cycle for recycling.

**Recycle:** To use again or reprocess.

**Remodernist:** A Modernist who believes that social and environmental issues must also be considerations in future-forward thinking, in addition to form and function.

**Renewable Energy:** Energy harvested from sources that are not depleted when used, typically causing very low environmental impact. Examples include solar energy, hydroelectric power, and wind power.

**Remanufacturing:** A recycled concept by which an existing product can have its useful life extended through a secondary manufacturing or refurbishing process such as remanufactured systems furniture.

**Renewable:** A raw material that can be replenished within a reasonable amount of time. Example, bamboo and sustainably-harvested woods are renewable. Gold and precious stones are not renewable.

**Repurpose:** Taking a thing or a material and using it for a purpose not originally intended. Repurposed goods often have a lot of inherent character, flair, and style.

**Re-use:** To use again, whether for the same purpose or reappropriated for another.

**Sustainable:** Actions and products that meet current needs without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Sustainability is a broad term and often refers to the desire to provide the best outcomes for the human and natural environments both now and into the indefinite future.

**Sustainably-harvested:** A renewable resource that has been harvested in a way that allows its inherent regeneration and continued ongoing supply.

**Small Business:** A company that employs under 100 people and is usually a privately owned corporation. Small businesses fuel local economic growth and innovation.

**Vintage:** Refers to something genuinely from the past that is valued for its age, condition, style, or other qualities not available as a new product. Generally not as old as antiques.

**VOC:** Volatile organic compounds. VOC's are toxins commonly found in conventional paints, sealers, and finishes. VOC's off-gas into the air and are not good to people or to the environment.

**Waste Reduction:** A process to reduce or eliminate that amount of waste generated at its source or to reduce the amount of toxicity from waste or the reuse of materials. The creation of waste is a growing problem on the environment, as landfills get filled and toxins leach back into the ground. The best way to reduce waste is not to create it in the first place.

**Wastewater:** Water that has been used and contaminated. Wastewater must be purified before being used again or before being returned to the environment.

**Zero-VOC:** A term used to indicate paint containing no volatile organic compounds - a healthier alternative to conventional paints.

*Source: [www.re-modern.com](http://www.re-modern.com)*