

Eco Promotional Products, Inc.
**Sustainable
Purchasing Guide**



Introduction

While very few things are black and white in the world of sustainability, we do want to give you guidance on how to make decisions when selecting sustainable branded merchandise. If you refer to your merch as SWAG (**S**tuff **W**e **A**ll **G**et), please note we'd like to help protect your brand and elevate it by providing sustainable swag.



We're Proud to be a B Corp



Since 2008, Eco Promotional Products, Inc. has been helping universities, government agencies, non-profits and for-profit companies realize the importance of providing environmentally and socially responsible branded products. As a B Corp, we work towards a better and more sustainable future by using business as a force for good and following the UN's Global Compact and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). We prioritize where we can make the biggest impact with the products we sell and our work in our communities and further afield.

Choosing a sustainable promotional product begins by choosing a product with purpose. Not all products are created equally. While it might not be obvious what makes a product more sustainable than the next, we want to make sure your choice considers environmental benefits, but also addresses safety, ethics and the economy.



Product Selection

To begin your purposeful product selection, consider the following:

- 1** WHAT IS THE BUDGET?
- 2** WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?
- 3** HAS IT BEEN MADE FAIRLY AND SAFELY?
- 4** HOW IS IT PACKAGED AND TRANSPORTED?
- 5** DOES THE SELECTION HELP REDUCE WASTE?
- 6** IS DEI (DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION) BEING SUPPORTED?
- 7** WHY IS THE CHOSEN PRODUCT BETTER THAN THE ALTERNATIVE?
- 8** IS IT GOING TO BE USED AFTER THE EVENT, WHAT IS ITS LIFECYCLE?

Practical Example



If the School of Arts and Sciences is planning two simultaneous campaigns, one for current students and one for alumni, the type of product will be different. Alumni may have more opportunities to use certain items at their homes or workplaces versus students who may be living in the dorms and walking from classroom to classroom.

An alum might appreciate a 16 oz. glass they can use at their desk or anywhere in their house. After its used for the day, it can be washed and reused. A popular style such as a pint glass with their beloved school logo will become their "go-to" glass.

While a student may enjoy drinking from a glass, it's not the most practical choice. However, a nice reusable bottle made from a sturdy safe material with a carabiner will get refilled over and over.

Maximizing Brand Impressions

Something might be more sustainable, but if it's not useful or has a short life span (like food), you are not getting the most bang for your buck. Consider providing a food item in something useful. Two gifts in one. Example: Deliver the item in a reusable lunch tote or reusable branded mug.



Being a sustainable promotional products company, one of our best-selling categories is growables. If you have an event and use name badges, consider a seeded name badge. This will leave a lasting impression and a gift as well. While once a disposable item, they are now a keepsake. Seeded wristbands are also a great alternative to disposable Tyvek wristbands. Make sure the seeds are U.S. cultivated and support local biodiversity.

Addressing Safety and Ethics

When choosing sustainable promotional product partners, it is essential to confirm that they uphold a strong Code of Conduct that emphasizes the ethical treatment of people manufacturing your goods. At Eco Promotional Products, Inc. (EPP), our commitment to safety and ethics extends beyond our company. We have established an internal corporate Code of Conduct and another for our entire supply chain with a clear focus on environmental and social responsibility. EPP values transparency and integrity when requesting documentation and developing partnerships. We firmly believe that every worker should experience a safe and inclusive environment. EPP refers to criteria set by the B Lab U.S. and Canada, the Fair Labor Association, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and other conscious institutions seeking to create a more resilient world. We ensure our business practices align with global standards for sustainability and worker's rights.



Packaging and Transportation

Before we add a product to our website or suggest a product to our customers, we consider how an item is packaged. Because Styrofoam packaging is so difficult to recycle, you will not find drinkware sets with foam packaging on our site. Your order will never contain packing peanuts. To minimize packaging waste, it is our goal to only use recyclable packaging when orders are shipped. If an item is individually polybagged to protect the imprint and prevent scratching during shipment, we do our best to make our customers aware of the packaging. Our main sources of packaging are recyclable cardboard and polybags/air pillows which can be easily recycled in plastic recycling containers at grocery stores.

We try to reduce the carbon footprint of shipping by working with our customers to select items that ship from factories closest to them. We also use UPS carbon neutral shipping. This minimizes the carbon footprint of having to ship coast to coast or overnight.



Helping everyone work towards a more waste-free lifestyle

It's important to offer sustainable promotional items in all price points. What you may not see clearly is the research that has gone into making sure each of these products has been made safely, humanely, and is high quality to be used for many years to come. For our customers' safety, all of our drinkware is BPA-free and Prop. 65 Compliant.

\$1 - \$2

RECYCLED WATER BOTTLE



\$5 - \$8

SOFT TOUCH WATER BOTTLE



\$15 - \$20

STAINLESS STEEL BOTTLE



Depending on your event or audience, a sure winner is providing branded waste-free items. Some favorite examples are: reusable utensil sets, reusable straws, and food containers. The recipient will carry your brand with pride and know they are helping by addressing greater issues plaguing our world.



*Potential Pitfall – Make sure your waste-free promo item does not come individually wrapped in disposable packaging. Through our journey, we have been educating suppliers and manufacturers to reduce wasteful packaging. If individual polybagging or wrapping is necessary due to protecting the imprint upon shipping, consider asking for a waiver to eliminate the extra packaging.



How We Hand Select Our Product Offerings



Selecting the Most Sustainable T-shirts & Other Apparel

Selecting the most sustainable apparel is a full-time job. We know there are hundreds of apparel brands from which to choose. But what you may not know is the sustainability stories behind the brands. When selecting your next apparel item consider the following: **CSR practices, materials, country of origin, printing methods and packaging.**

Eco Promotional Products, Inc. is an active member of the Fair Labor Association. We look to their guidance to discover more behind apparel brands. Since 1999, FLA has helped improve the lives of millions of workers around the world by creating lasting solutions to abusive labor practices by offering tools and resources to companies, delivering training to factory workers and management, conducting due diligence through independent assessments, and advocating for greater accountability and transparency from companies, manufacturers, factories and others involved in global supply chains.



What is the most sustainable fabric? It depends on who you ask and what is important to you.

Think about what you like to wear and what your favorite t-shirt, hoodie, baseball cap, joggers, and socks look and feel like. Now let us help find the sustainable version of your favorites. The most sustainable fabrics are organic or recycled cotton, organic hemp, organic linen, Tencel, and recycled polyester.

The least sustainable fabrics are acrylic, nylon, polyester, conventionally-grown cotton, and viscose rayon.

Many people love the soft feel of cotton. While cotton is a naturally occurring fiber, conventionally-grown cotton poses many problems for the environment. According to WWF, it takes more than 20,000 liters (5,283 gallons) of water to produce just one kilogram (2.2 pounds) of cotton, which roughly equals one t-shirt and a pair of jeans. Bamboo in its original form is highly sustainable and has many environmentally friendly attributes. Turning bamboo into fiber for clothing, sheets, furniture, etc. is an unacceptable, chemically intensive process.

Most bamboo textiles are made from viscose rayon, which is created from bamboo or wood pulp processed in a toxic bath of chemicals that generates significant pollution harmful to factory workers and the environment. Dr. Paul D. Blanc is a professor of occupational and environmental medicine at the University of California, San Francisco and the author of the book "Fake Silk: The Lethal History of Viscose Rayon." In an article in B Corp's [B Magazine](#) [Bland](#) said, **"If you buy something that has even 50 percent viscose rayon, don't kid yourself [that you're] buying a 'green' product."** This highly informative article also includes a helpful "fake bamboo glossary."

Sustainable Apparel Vocabulary

GOTS

The Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) is the worldwide leading textile processing standard for organic fibers, including ecological and social criteria, backed by independent certification of the entire textile supply chain.

WRAP CERTIFIED

WRAP, or the Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production, is the world's largest independent certification program that promotes human-friendly and eco-friendly mass production practices worldwide. Their certifications include verification for health, safety, security, and many more.

BLUESIGN

BlueSign is an independent sustainability verifier that tracks manufacturing processes of textiles to ensure accountability for sustainable production processes. Their BlueSign® certified criteria outlines definitive conduct to assess said processes, with a commitment to provide improvements at every step of the creation development.

REPREVE

REPREVE is a certified recycled fiber that is made from plastic items like water bottles. Said plastic is cut into small beads that can then be threaded into REPREVE fibers. REPREVE can be used to make anything from notebooks to clothing. The versatility and durability of this fiber make for long lasting products.

GRS

The Global Recycling Standards, or GRS, sets voluntary and international procedures for third-party verification of recycled materials.

Eco Promotional Products, Inc. advice for sourcing sustainable apparel. Does your choice accomplish the following:

- Support Human Rights
- Use less energy to produce
- Use less water to produce
- Reduce textile waste and other areas contributing to climate change
- Use sustainable materials
- Promote higher standards for business practices
- Provide supply chain transparency
- Have a Give Back Donation Program
- Give suggestions for apparel end-of-life

Product Selection

**Selecting the
most
sustainable
items:**

1 DRINKWARE

2 AWARDS

3 WASTE-FREE LUNCH ITEMS

Selecting the Most Sustainable Drinkware



Material: BPA-Free, Prop. 65 Compliant, 304 or 18/8 Food Grade Stainless Steel (see next page for more information).



Where it's made: While the majority of drinkware sold in the U.S. is imported, we offer many great water bottles made in the USA from plastic, glass, and aluminum.



Lifespan: A durable Eastman Tritan plastic or high-quality stainless steel bottle will last for years.



End of life: Almost all of our drinkware is recyclable, but always check local recycling guidelines. Aluminum is an infinitely recyclable material.

Selecting the Most Sustainable Drinkware



Material:

- **BPA-Free:** BPA, or bisphenol A, is a chemical used to make plastics for consumer products. Said products can include storage containment systems like water bottles. While the FDA has clarified that bisphenol A is non-toxic in low levels, there are existing concerns for this material seeping into food or beverages. Mayo Clinic has reported links between BPA exposure and effects on brain and infant development, as well as health complications like cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. All of our drinkware is BPA-Free to ensure these problems are avoided in full.
- **Prop. 65 Compliant:** Proposition 65 is a Californian law passed in 1986 that obligates businesses to inform their customers about any hazardous chemicals that can be found in their products. Any exposure in said products that causes health issues, like birth defects or cancer, must be identified by businesses to warn consumers. Businesses that are Prop. 65 Compliant follow these requirements to ensure the safety and wellness of their patrons.
- **304 or 18/8 Food Grade Stainless Steel:** 18/8 or 304 is the most common food grade stainless steel. Why these numbers? 304 refers to the grading type, while 18/8 clarifies the amount of chromium and nickel present. Thus, this type of stainless steel is composed of 18% chromium and 8% nickel. This distinction is necessary in determining the appropriate content used for kitchen appliances, as stainless steel is a conveniently durable and safe material to use in cookware.

Selecting the Most Sustainable Awards



Material: Our awards are made from sustainably sourced, rapidly renewable bamboo, recycled wood, and recycled glass.



Where it's made: Almost all of our awards are manufactured in the U.S.



Lifespan: Choose beautiful, unique awards that people will want to display or choose a multi-functional glass coaster award.



End of life: Aluminum awards can be recycled. For recycled glass, check local recycling options.

Additional tips for sustainable purchasing:

- Avoid putting a date on any branded items. If an event is postponed or canceled, you will be able to use the items another time.
- Buy only what you need. If you have extras, can they be used after an event, or will you be able to donate them?
- Give recipients the option to opt-out if they feel they will not use the product. Some companies give employees the choice of a charitable donation if they decline a gift.
- Consider the carbon footprint of the item(s) you are choosing. Where do the items ship from?
- With consumables, add a long-lasting branded product.
- Choose items that are easy to refill, like hand sanitizer bottles, travel first aid kits, or a pen with an easy-to-find ink refill.

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