

Green Printing Guidelines

Get high quality visual appeal along with environmental benefits. Green printing options have improved dramatically in the past decade, and are now readily available.



Did you know...?

- Paper production is the largest single industrial user of water in the United States.
- The pulp and paper industry is the third largest industrial consumer of energy in the United States.
- Paper is the single largest component of the U.S. waste stream, comprising 25% of the material sent to landfills and incinerators – even after much of it is diverted for recycling.

#1 Quantity

- Print only what you need. Rather than printing extras, post the file online for download “as needed.”

#2 Paper

- Minimum **30% post-consumer** content. “Post-Consumer” content is made from paper collected in recycling program like ours. “Pre-consumer” content is from paper that never left the factory. Standard weight (20-24 lb) recycled papers are reliably quality and cost-competitive with virgin papers. More price and quality variation in heavier stock. New Leaf is the leading brand of recycled papers.
- **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)** certification for paper with virgin or pre-consumer paper content. FSC approval indicates environmentally-conscious management of forests for pulp. For example, no clearcutting or use of protected old growth wood.
- **Total chlorine free (TCF) or process chlorine free (PCF)** paper. Wastewater from chlorine bleaching processes is toxic to stream ecosystems.
- **Uncoated**, non-gloss paper has higher recycle value than coated paper, and requires fewer chemicals in production.

#3 Ink

- **Vegetable or soy-based ink.** These have substantially lower volatile organic compound (VOC) concentrations than standard inks. (Negative effects of VOC exposure to humans can range from minor irritation and headaches to allergic reactions and even increased cancer risk.)

#4 Print Shop

- **Up-to-date knowledge and involvement with sustainable printing choices.** Like most products, there is a range of quality for recycled papers and vegetable inks. Some printing processes are more energy efficient than others. A print business with employees who seek more sustainable options will generally offer better quality and more cost effective green printing options.
- Get **samples** of their green printing products before completing a big job.
- Consider asking printers about green features of their business when bidding the job. For example, do they have a comprehensive recycling program? Are they powered by renewable energy?

#5 Delivery

- **Minimize packaging** and plastic wrap on the final order, and when you deliver the publication to the end user.
- Inquire about **re-order options.** Can you get preferred pricing and quick turnaround if, for example, you order 2,000 copies up front then place a second order if you need any additional copies in the future, rather than ordering 3,000 “just in case.”
- If the publication is bound, **choose a binding that is easy to remove or recycle.** Avoid plastic covers, plastic coatings, and metal or plastic bindings whenever possible.

Note

Some print shops will steer you away from green options like recycled paper. High quality, cost-competitive options are available. Work with vendors that provide them.

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