Trails & Roots Greenwashing Guide

What is Greenwashing?

It's absolutely everywhere and makes it hard to shop sustainably - but what is it?

Greenwashing is a marketing ploy in which companies intentionally use deceptive strategies (via labels, packaging, or advertising) to persuade the public that their products or mission are environmentally friendly.

These marketing tactics effectively persuade individuals into believing that buying the "green" item equates to an environmentally responsible choice

How can I tell if it's Greenwashing?

The Hidden Trade-Off

Companies promote one sustainable aspect while neglecting to mention the larger and more important environmental issues in other areas

- Example: A label might say “made with recycled materials” but fail to mention the enormous amount of water used in manufacturing

No Proof

A company makes a sustainability claim without any credible proof to support it

- Example: Packaging might say “made with ocean plastic”, but in reality, complex supply chains make it nearly impossible to trace back plastic

Vagueness

Companies use this practice when they use buzzwords such as “green”, “eco-friendly”, or “natural”

- Example: Packaging will be green and/or have foliage on it, claiming “eco-friendly” while the company evades any specific commitment

Irrelevance

Making environmental claims that, while potentially truthful, are entirely irrelevant

- Deodorant companies boasting that their cans are CFC-free, when CFCs have been globally banned since 1989

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The Lesser of Two Evils

Companies claim that their "eco-friendly" product is better than the alternative, while ignoring the overall damaging nature of their product or industry

- Example: Coffee capsule companies assert their capsules are fully recyclable, conveniently avoiding the reality of the polluting nature of the capsules to begin with

Fibbing

Companies falsify statistics, certifications, or claims to pretend that they or their products are more environmentally friendly than they are

- Example: Many companies claim their plastic packaging to be fully recyclable when they actually aren't

False Labels

The implication of independent third-party certifications or awards when none such exist

- Example: Companies will use clever branding to slap a fake green label on their product claiming "certified 100% natural ingredients", when in reality this isn't a real certification

How can I tell the Real Deal from Greenwashing?

Trusted Labels

Reputable, traceable, and trusted organizations' labels

Businesses that are part of this organization donate 1% of annual sales (not profits!) to environmental organizations. **Trails and Roots is a proud member of this network!**

In order to obtain this certification, companies must meet high social and environmental standards.

These labels ensure that producers are paid and treated fairly while upholding strong environmental standards.

Transparency

Information is easily and readily available to the consumer with concrete data on their manufacturing practices, including water and air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, energy use, and worker conditions.

Right to Repair

Harder to find, but some brands really promote repairing items you already own rather than throwing them out and buying new ones.

Becoming Greenwashing Warriors

It can be tough to distinguish genuine sustainability efforts from greenwashing, but learning what to look out for can make shopping responsibly much easier.

Where do I shop?

First, three key points:

- The most environmentally friendly choice is often what you already own so first do your best to **extend the lifespan of existing clothing** in your closet through proper care and use is a powerful sustainability practice.
- Many brands excel in one area but could do better in others, so look at their **sustainability efforts overall.**
- **Sportswear is inherently difficult to make 100% sustainable.** Balancing the need to make flexible products that wick sweat with environmental considerations isn't always straightforward.

There are, however, a few companies talking the talk & walking the walk when it comes to sustainability.

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Ethical Outdoor Companies

Patagonia - Are part of 1% for the Planet (which was founded by Patagonia's founder, Yvon Chouinard), are transparent and responsible with the source and production of their products, and promote buying their products secondhand

Fjällräven - Use materials with minimal impact to reduce the presence of chemicals, water, and wastewater within its supply chain and are actively taking steps to address their carbon emissions throughout their supply chain.

Nnormal - Taking steps towards being almost completely carbon neutral (meaning they remove the same amount of carbon from the atmosphere that they emit), communicate the carbon footprint of the products, push circularity by promoting buying less of, repairing, and recycling their products, and are certified B Corp

SOAR Running - Offer a repair service and have conducted a carbon audit, with the vast majority of its products transported via road rather than air, meaning more environmental and workers' protections and less overall emissions

Good on You - website and application that is an excellent resource on brands' sustainability. Looking at People, Planet, and Animal impacts, it's a comprehensive guide that has thousands of brands already in its database

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Ready to Choose Your Adventure?

Check out all of our Trail Camps here>>>>

Have more Questions?

Contact our **Chief Running Officer**, Heather, directly at heather@trailsandroots.com