

How do I...choose the right paper?

Paper isn't just green –it's is super green!

First and foremost, we should say that the vast majority of paper, whether virgin or recycled is environmentally friendly. There are very few manufacturers now, especially not in the UK, Europe or the US, who do not work to extremely high environmental standards and who ensure that the raw materials that they use to produce their products is from credible sources. They work hard to ensure that these sources of raw material are 'sustainable' as this simply makes good business sense. To rip up forests 'willy nilly' and not have a plan for the future, makers companies very quickly go out of business –not thebrightest idea! So, papermakers plant trees as a crop –in the same way as a farmer plants potatoes or carrots. And, for every tree that is harvested, three or four are replanted to ensure that future supplies are plentiful.

This all means that choosing a paper with the right environmental pedigree becomes very easy in today's market, but there are a number of options that will make it even easier for you to enhance your green credentials.

Print on paper is definitely the way to go if you are looking for the most environmentally friendly way to produce any form of communication. Looking at the substrate itself, at its making, its raw materials and its production processes, as well as its whole lifecycle – for all these elements, paper is much better for the planet than the alternatives. It is very difficult to measure one paper against another because there are so many variables to consider, but any paper is sustainable, as the trees are managed to high environmental standards and audited by credible third parties.

But, this is only half the story. The industry works hard to ensure that its production processes are clean and green. With environmentally friendly forms of power, including wind and solar, good management practices and a sustainable raw material, how can any other substrate stand above paperboard when it comes to the environment?

It is worth mentioning that the combined pulp, paper and print industries globally only account for 1% of greenhouse gas emissions – one of the lowest scores of all industries, whilst only 5% of the water used is actually consumed by the process – some 95% is returned to original sources in a better, and cleaner, condition than when it was taken!



Be wise

So, what are our top tips for choosing the best paper when it comes to the environment?

1. Always work with a trusted supplier. This is the absolute first! Always make sure that your paper supplier is as environmentally friendly as you are. Check that they have buying processes set up to ensure that they, in turn, get their products from credible sources.
2. Always choose a brand from a well known manufacturer – one who is absolutely transparent and happy to supply you with information on its environmental practices.
3. Look at what else your suppliers do – are they just ticking the boxes or do they go beyond the norm when it comes to eco initiatives? Will they provide help and advice –for free? Do they give you access to tools to help you make the right choices? Is the green angle something they are well known for, or have they just jumped on the bandwagon?
4. Check the claims that are made about that paper. If it claims certification, then make sure that it is indeed certified. If it claims that it is 'carbon balanced' find out what has actually been measured –not all are quantified in the same way.
5. The choice between recycled and virgin is really up to you. Much debate has been had about which is more environmentally friendly. But, actually they both have pros and cons –like anything. Decide on a job by job basis. There are no runnability issues with recycled (at least there shouldn't be now), and there are plenty of choices when it comes to colours, size, weight, finish and even specialities.
6. Think about using paper wisely –are you specifying the right size for instance, or are you going for an off the shelf size that you don't really need and end up with excess waste? Controlling the paper you buy and making the right choices at this stage can save you considerably – both in terms of money and being green.

Did you know...

- Cardboard takes less than two months to biodegrade.
- A paper based waxed milk carton will be gone in three months.
- An aluminium can will still be lying in the ground in 200 years.
- A paper bag will take a couple of months.
- A plastic bag could take up to 500 years.
- A plastic bottle may never biodegrade, so will forever be a reminder of unsustainable products.