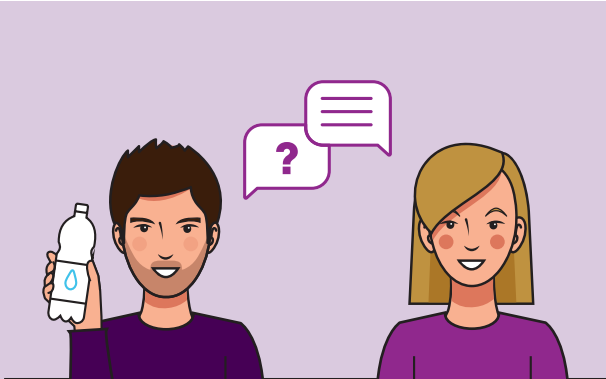


Accurate communication:

a useful reference guide
about packaging ecodesign

Communication is a transversal action in any ecodesign process, as it acts to broadcast commitments made and actions taken regarding **responsible procurement, optimized design** and **end-of-life management**.

The Ecodesign and Circular Economy Team of Éco Entreprises Québec (ÉEQ) has prepared this brief reference guide full of practical tips for optimal actions, as well as key relevant messages for you to address to your consumers and partners.

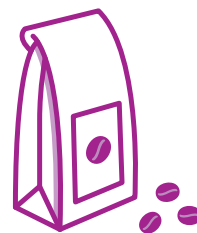


More and more companies are committing to reducing the impacts their packaging has on the environment, and consumers are increasingly conscious of their own consumption's environmental footprint.

That being said, with all the so-called "environmentally friendly" claims being made, sometimes it gets hard to know what's what.

To avoid confusion and facilitate communication with consumers, it is essential to have simple and honest messages that inform consumers of improvements you have made to your packaging. It's up to you to define efficient communication strategies that underscore your commitments, highlight your actions and track your improvements - in other words, whatever characterizes your packaging ecodesign process.

Don't forget: Customers may always have the last word, but they aren't always right. And because packaging may seem unnecessary or futile to some, it may be useful to point out the various roles it plays.



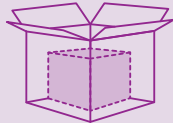
"Your ground coffee's packaging serves to protect it from light and oxygen. Without it, it wouldn't be as fresh and tasty!"

You should also keep in mind that all products and packaging have environmental impacts, as no perfect solution exists. It's all a question of compromise to be put into context!

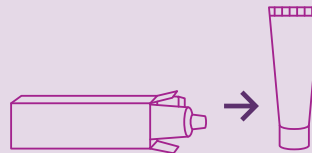
Communicating efficiently in three steps*

List improvements made to the packaging and choose the most relevant ones to pass on to consumers.

Reducing packaging mass or volume to achieve a better packaging-to-product ratio.



Removing components (pouch, box, cap, sleeve, straw, film, etc.).



Integrating or using recycled content.



Support any information provided with facts.

Quantitative/qualitative comparative data from old product to new, visuals, certification, etc.

Access to documents or proof (reports, studies, Internet pages, blogs, etc.).

Inform consumers unambiguously!

A relevant, precise, factual and verifiable message.

Transparent and honest communication to avoid greenwashing. See the frame. →

Deceitful communication through greenwashing

This concept usually takes the form of misleading environmental claims that contribute, voluntarily or involuntarily, to disinformation. Greenwashing is expressed in various forms.**

- ✗ Hidden trade-off that goes unmentioned
- ✗ Absence of actual proof
- ✗ Lack of precision that creates confusion
- ✗ Fake logos or deceitful labels
- ✗ Irrelevancy or futility of the claim
- ✗ Lesser of two evils or flip side of the coin
- ✗ The lie or the Pinocchio syndrome

Examples of greenwashing claims: eco-friendly; green; good for the planet; respectful of the environment; non-polluting; protects nature; etc.

** Terra Choice, 2017. **Sins of greenwashing.**

* This section of the guide was inspired by the **Guide de la communication responsable** from CITEO.

Communicate what? Communicate where?

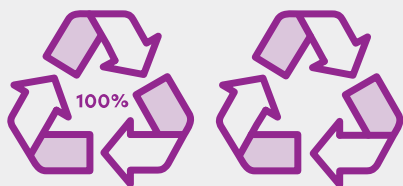
To respond to consumers who want to know what your packaged products' environmental performance is, there's plenty of information you can provide. Because they often point the finger at unnecessary packaging, consumers are curious to know more about:

- Simplifying packaging and eliminating a component;
- Lightening or reducing volume, to eliminate useless empty space and be closer to the product;
- Better dosage to avoid excess consumption;
- Better design in order to use all of the product, down to the last drop or bite;
- Resealable packaging to avoid waste.

Remember, communication happens on the package itself, such as by indicating the right sorting instructions or your improvement efforts, for example, as well as on your website, blogs and social media accounts, by telling your story, sharing your roadmap, goals, successes and even challenges!



Beware of similarities



Chasing arrows (or Möbius strip)

The Chasing arrows indicates that the packaging or container are potentially recyclable, whereas a percentage printed in the center of the symbol indicates that the packaging or container contains a portion of recycled material.

It should be noted that the Chasing arrows is a self-declaration that is not verified by a third-party but is nevertheless regulated under ISO 14021.



Identification Code

The identification code includes a number and an abbreviation indicating what material the packaging is made with. This visual was created by and for the industry, not for the consumer!

Although the identification code may give an indication as to the packaging's potential for recyclability, it mainly serves to specify the type of materials that make up the packaging.

To communicate on the potential of a packaging's recyclability, the preferred recommendation is to include sorting instructions for the consumer.

According to One Planet Network's report titled *Can I Recycle This?*, the identification code should not be placed close to the word "recyclable", to avoid consumers misinterpreting the information.

Communication regarding packaging ecodesign: Preferred actions and what to avoid

It's often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. That's why this section features concrete examples and visuals of communication.

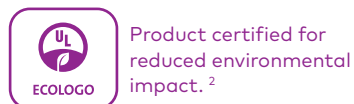
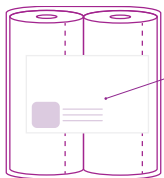
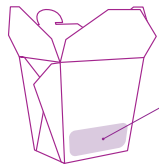
Also, to give you added inspiration, here are some preferred practices, that some companies here or elsewhere are already communicating regarding their successes and their packaging's attributes.

Responsible sourcing

PREFERRED ACTIONS

Origin of materials

Do you have recognized and verifiable environmental certifications? Indicate them!



Recycled content

Is your packaging made entirely or partially of a recycled material? Indicate the percentage of recycled content in the center of the Chasing arrows or next to it. Be clear and concise.



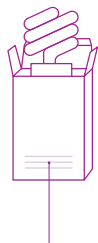
Made with 100% recycled plastic. 3



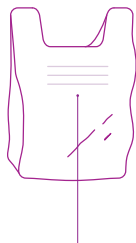
Label made from 20% recycled fiber and bottle made from 100% recycled PET.

TO BE AVOIDED

Do not indicate vague or incomplete information that lacks precision.

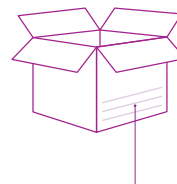


This box is made from a sustainable source.



This plastic bag is eco-friendly.

If your packaging (material) type has never contained any toxic substances, don't indicate it – it's not relevant.



Our cardboard containers are BPA-free.

Optimized design

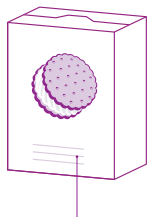
PREFERRED ACTIONS

Manufacturing and shaping

Did you improve the shape of your packaging or did you develop a new one? Indicate the benefits generated by optimizing the manufacturing and shaping of your packaging.

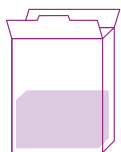


"Our new cup uses 17% less plastic than before and emits 38% less greenhouse gases during its production. Wow that's something we can all feel good about." ⁴



"In order to reduce the environmental footprint of this product and preserve its quality, we have chosen to use the minimum amount of packaging." ⁵

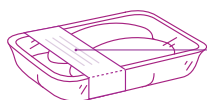
If you reduced the packaging-to-product ratio, that's something to be proud of! Indicate it on your package.



Less packaging, still the same amount. ⁶

You do know that your packaging is very useful to protect and preserve your product?

Don't hesitate to let your consumers know the role it plays.



Leak Proof.
Extends Freshness.
Freezer ready. ⁷

Who ever said very colourful packaging is better for the eyes?

If you chose a transparent, additive-free packaging, help your consumers see how your choice has benefits regarding recyclability.

"It may not seem it, but this is clearly our greenest bottle." ⁸



Material

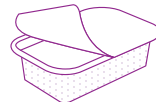
Provide consumers with information regarding the benefits of the material or materials you use.



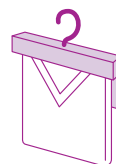
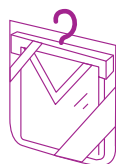
"The fibres of this sweater generate up to 54% fewer carbon emissions than conventional Modal. Moreover, their manufacturing reduces the impact on water by 35%." ⁹



"76% cardboard and a little plastic and aluminum to preserve the taste of your butter." ¹⁰



You are satisfied with your team's efforts regarding the modification of your packaging and/or the eliminated or reduced use of a material? Say it!



New paper packaging with minimal plastic. ¹¹

Consumer experience

If you rethought your consumers' experience by optimizing your packaging or your product, explain it!



"Less does more.
1 capful = 1 big load seriously." ¹²

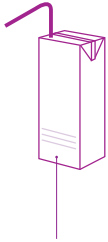


We have changed the shape of the container to allow you to consume your favorite yogurt until the last spoonful and avoid food loss.

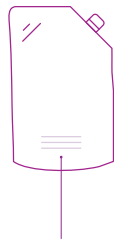
Optimized design

TO BE AVOIDED

Avoid making accuracy mistakes and giving information that is vague or without references, which might be misleading to the consumer.

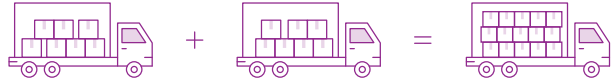


Designed to be recycled.



20% less resources were extracted in the process of making this package.

Avoid presenting an improvement without data to back it. Without concrete proof, that amounts to greenwashing!



We have optimized our logistics. It means less trucks on the road.

End-of-life management

PREFERRED ACTIONS

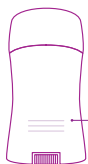
Reuse and repurpose

You designed your packaging to be reused or repurposed?

Great! Let your customers know.



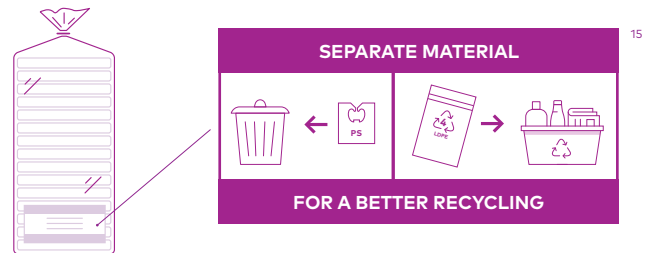
Reduce. Reuse. Recycle. Bring me back.¹³



Refillable deodorant.¹⁴

Sorting instructions

Nothing beats informing your consumers – either with a short sentence or a clear pictogram – as to how each component of your packaging has to be handled at the end of its life.



Remove the sleeve label from the container before placing it in the recovery tray. Discard the sleeve label.¹⁶

End-of-life management

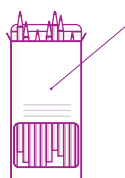
TO BE AVOIDED

Don't include the Chasing arrows without adding any other indication.

Indicating recyclability is not enough, as that is a self-declaration, unverified by a third party



Avoid printing claims like "easy to recycle" or "mostly recyclable" on your packaging. This type of information is vague and irrelevant to your consumers.



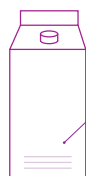
Mostly recyclable cardboard box.

Don't specify a rate of recyclability on your packaging. You can't guarantee that the packaging will indeed be recycled to the percentage indicated.



100% recyclable.

Don't print "recyclable" or "recyclable/recycled where facilities exist" on your packaging. This doesn't really help consumers know how they should recycle this!



Recyclable, where facilities exist.

Don't improvise yourself as an artist by creating visuals and logos that might look similar to those certified by a recognized organization, as this might be confusing, in addition to being a form of greenwashing.



Eco-friendly bottle.

Did you like our recommendations?

For more information, visit our **Strategy 4 – Communication** section, as well as the document on **External Resources – Communication** on our portal!

References: examples of companies

DISCLAIMER:

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- ¹ BARRANCO – FSC. As seen on a take-out container of the Barranco restaurant. Montreal. July 2021.
- ² COMPLIMENTS – ECOLOGO. <https://www.compliments.ca/en/products/green-care-half-size-sheets-paper-towels-90-sheets-6-rolls/>. Consulted in September 2021.
- ³ PALMOLIVE. <https://www.trendhunter.com/trends/palmolive-ultra-dish-soap>. Consulted in July 2021
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- ⁵ LAITERIE CHAGNON. As seen on the packaging of Laiterie Chagnon ice cream sandwiches in a Montreal grocery store. June 2021.
- ⁶ KELLOGG'S. <https://www.packagingdigest.com/packaging-design/kellogg-company-tests-new-space-saving-box>. Consulted in September 2021.
- ⁷ SEALED AIR. <https://progressivegrocer.com/todays-food-packaging-puts-safety-first>. Consulted in August 2021.
- ⁸ 7UP – BRITVIC PLC. <https://www.britvic.com/media-centre/corporate-news/2021/clearly-our-greenest-bottle-yet-7up-switches-to-clear-plastic-to-boost-recycling-rates>. Consulted in June 2021.
- ⁹ SIMONS. As seen on the label of a clothe sold by Simons. Quebec. August in 2021.
- ¹⁰ PAYSAN BRETON. <https://www.paysanbreton.com/en-ce-moment/tous-nos-articles/keurrier-carton-recyclable>. Consulted in July 2021.
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- ¹² METHOD. <https://www.canadiantire.ca/en/pdp/method-laundry-detergent-66-load-1-58-l-1530141p.html>. Consulted in August 2021
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- ¹⁵ MÉTRO – SÉLECTION. As seen on the packaging of Selection bagels at a Metro grocery store. Montreal. August 2021.
- ¹⁶ NESTLÉ. <https://www.emsur.com/emsur-nestle-innovation-peelable-banderole/>. Consulted in September 2021.

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