

# The world of eco-responsible packaging: a practical guide

## How to recognize eco-responsible packaging



Before buying a product, take a look at its packaging. You will notice that some companies use packaging that is both resistant and more eco-responsible, and therefore has less impact on the environment. Here are three eco-responsible characteristics to look for:

- 1) Made with recycled materials
- 2) Recyclable
- 3) Designed to use fewer materials

## 1) When possible, choose products with packaging that was made with recycled materials.

Many companies already choose to use recycled materials for their packaging. Doing so not only preserves such natural resources as trees, petroleum and metals, but also contributes to giving a second life to the containers, packaging and printed matter you place in your recycling bin.

### Do your part in preserving the environment

When packaging is made with recycled materials, the impact on the environment is usually lesser, as fewer raw materials and less energy are used, and smaller quantity of greenhouse gases are released into the air.

### How to recognize eco-responsible packaging

Take a quick look at the packaging. It usually indicates whether it contains recycled materials. The percentage is indicated in a short phrase or in the centre of the three chasing arrows known as the Mobius strip, the well-known recycling symbol. This should not, however, be confused with the triangle of three chasing arrows used to indicate various types of plastic categorized from one to seven.

## 2) Choose products with packaging that can be easily recycled or used for other purposes.

Some packaging is so practical or pretty that we can use them for other purposes once the product has been used. However, when that's not possible, placing the packaging in the recycling bin is an excellent way to give it a second life.

### Fewer types of materials for easier recycling

Although most packaging and printed matter are recyclable, packaging made with only one material is easier to recycle. If a packaging item has several components made with different materials, simply separate the parts before placing them in your recycling bin. For example, circulars are much easier to recycle once they've been removed from their plastic bag!

### Use packaging twice instead of just once!

We don't always realize that many products have packaging that can be reused. For example, reclosable plastic or glass containers could be used to store or preserve other products, or the prettiest among them could easily become a flower vase or water jug.

## 3) Choose products with packaging that was designed to use fewer materials.

Packaging plays several roles: it protects the product from shock and breakage, makes handling easier and displays information. In the case of perishable products such as food, cosmetics and medication, packaging plays a crucial role in their preservation and conservation, while prolonging the product's useful life and therefore preventing waste.

### Avoid overpackaging

Sometimes, packaging is made with more materials than necessary to fulfill its functions. That's what is called overpackaging. It's also the expression used to describe packaging whose sole purpose is to make the product more attractive to the consumer. Good news: More and more companies understand the consequences of overpackaging. They now choose packaging that is better adapted to the size of the product, or use boxes and bottles with thinner walls.

### Risks of underpackaging

The opposite of overpackaging is underpackaging, where too little packaging could result in product loss or breakage whether at home, at the store or along the procurement and transportation chain. In many cases, the environmental footprint of the product itself is more significant than that of its packaging. Growing fruits, for example, could require more energy and natural resources than does the packaging that protects them. It's therefore not worth the risk of wasting or damaging a product just to reduce the quantity of packaging.

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