

# Don't Get Greenwashed!

## A simple guide to avoid being misled by green claims



The phenomenon of placing environmental claims on products that aren't necessarily true, verified, or meaningful is commonly referred to as "greenwashing." Merriam-Webster lists the definition as 'expressions of environmentalist concerns especially as a cover for products, policies, or activities.' Consumers think they're getting an environmentally responsible product, but are they?

Last year, Underwriters Laboratories launched UL Environment to meet the growing need for new, relevant and reliable standards for environmental sustainability. UL Environment tests and validates environmental claims such as recycled content, energy efficiency and water efficiency, so you can feel confident about your green product choices.

### Here are a few tips consumers can use to avoid being greenwashed:

- 1 READ THE LABEL**  
Look for verifiable words, not general ones such as "natural," "real" or "environmentally friendly." Watch for over-descriptive language that romances rather than relates facts. And any product that lists "poison," "danger" or "warning" on the label is probably not good for you or the environment.
- 2 BUY LOCAL**  
Shopping your local farmers market not only supports the community, but it puts you in direct contact with the sellers and there is a higher likelihood that you can verify the environmental claims made about foods.
- 3 DON'T GET SOLD BY ONE ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIM**  
A product that is energy efficient but also highly toxic to the environment is not the most environmentally responsible choice.
- 4 AVOID OVER PACKAGING**  
Excess packaging can conceal the true attributes of the product and is not environmentally friendly.
- 5 BE SMART**  
CFCs were banned 20 year ago, yet you still find products that advertise that they are CFC-free. You've just encountered a deceptive claim. Watch out for other obvious and contradictory claims such as "organic cigarettes" or "eco-friendly pesticides."
- 6 THIRD-PARTY VALIDATION**  
Look for independent validation from a trusted source such as UL Environment.



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