

Paper Steps

Taking the Steps to Environmentally Responsible Paper

In the Steps below, 'environmental attributes' are defined as:

- Post-consumer Recycled Fiber
- Pre-consumer Recycled Fiber
- Agricultural Residue Fiber
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certified Virgin Fiber¹



[click to see papers that meet these criteria](#)

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ENVIRONMENTALLY IMPROVED PAPER

Meets the minimum criteria below and at least 50% of fiber has environmental attributes

MINIMUM CRITERIA:

- Minimum 30% post consumer recycled
- FSC certification required on papers with more than 50% virgin content
- No controversial sources^{4/5}
- Enhanced Elemental Chlorine Free (EECF)² Processed Chlorine Free or Totally Chlorine Free (PCF or TCF)

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS:

50% post-consumer recycled paper emits approx. 19-25% less greenhouse gases, and saves the equivalent of 8 to 13 trees per short ton.³

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUPERIOR PAPER

Meets the minimum criteria below and all fiber (100%) has environmental attributes

MINIMUM CRITERIA:

- Minimum 50% post consumer recycled
- Virgin fiber can not have controlled wood content⁶ or controversial sources⁵
- Processed Chlorine Free or Totally Chlorine Free (PCF or TCF)

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS:

100% post-consumer recycled paper emits 25-50% less greenhouse gases, and consumes no trees.³

To find a list of Environmentally Improved and Environmentally Superior Papers visit www.WhatsInYourPaper.com.

ENVIRONMENTALLY INFERIOR PAPER

This paper has no, or very minor, environmental attributes

MEETS NO MINIMUM CRITERIA:

- No/minimal recycled content
- Virgin tree fibers not FSC-certified
- Paper bleaching not Enhanced Elemental Chlorine Free (EECF)², Process Chlorine Free (PCF) or Totally Chlorine Free (TCF)

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

100% virgin paper emits 5,483 to 6,855 pounds of greenhouse gases and consumes 15-26 trees per short ton.³

TRANSITIONAL PAPER

Meets the minimum criteria below and at least 10-30% of fiber has environmental attributes

MINIMUM CRITERIA:

- 10% post consumer OR may be 100% virgin only if it has FSC certification
- Virgin fiber can not be from controversial sources^{4/5}
- Paper bleaching not Enhanced Elemental Chlorine Free (EECF)², Process Chlorine Free (PCF) or Totally Chlorine Free (TCF)

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS:

30% post-consumer recycled paper emits approx. 10-15% less greenhouse gases, and saves the equivalent of 4 to 8 trees per short ton.³

1. Refers to virgin from FSC certified forests.
 2. Enhanced Elemental Chlorine Free paper is made using technologies such as oxygen delignification and ozone bleaching prior to bleaching with chlorine dioxide.
 3. Source: Paper Calculator from Environmental Defense, based on national (US) averages and varies by paper type. Does not include emissions from the burning of biomass.
 4. FSC paper may contain pure, mixed or recycled sources. A 'transitional paper' does not include virgin fiber from controversial sources.
 5. Controversial Sources include Endangered Forests as defined in the Ecological Attributes of Endangered Forests (reference), and those sources dealt with in FSC under the Controlled Wood Standard, including fiber sources from High Conservation Value Forests or Ecosystems, or where there is a risk of illegal logging, violations of traditional or civil rights, ecosystems subject to conversion, or fiber from genetically modified organisms.
 6. To qualify for 'Environmentally Superior Paper,' no controlled wood content is allowed.

• The comparisons in this chart are assumed to be applied to a consistent grade of paper. Shifting from one grade to another, particularly from papers made from chemical pulp to those made from mechanical pulp may produce quite different comparisons of environmental impacts.
 • The criteria above correspond to the pulp rating system for www.Pulpwatch.org
 • The Paper Steps is based on the Hierarchy of Environmental Papers developed by Markets Initiative www.marketsinitiative.org