

5 Steps to Green Purchasing, Wherever!

Green Purchasing Basics and Your Local Supply Stores

It is important to keep in mind that in order to remain competitive, many of your local supply stores are starting to carry recycled content products, or would be willing to if customers showed interest. Here are some ways to buy green locally, or encourage your local stores to “green” their products.

1. In paper products, including printing and writing paper, notepads, folders, post-it notes, legal pads, envelopes, calendars, and more, look for the chasing arrows.
2. In technology, check products for the Energy Star symbol. You also might want to give preference to equipment that has double-sided printing capability, or to companies that offer brands of recycled content paper (which demonstrates their commitment to the environment).
3. For office supply products that contain plastic, such as tape dispensers, storage containers, and recycling and trash containers, look for the chasing arrows.
4. If you are shopping for furniture, there are a few sustainable design companies creating products. Try to shop for durable products rather than just choosing the cheapest product available. It may cost more upfront, but it could save you money over time by lasting longer and requiring less maintenance. Also, look for alternatives to wood furniture, such as recycled plastic lumber.
5. Finally, if your local supply store does not carry a product you are looking for, like organic or locally grown foods, visit the customer service desk. You can talk to a manager or fill out a form to voice your interest in purchasing more environmentally friendly products.

Green Purchasing Online

With the ease of the Internet and the development of customer friendly online shopping options from many popular stores, consumers are buying online more and more. But online shopping does not require you to leave your environmental consciousness behind! Here are some simple steps to staying green online at some of the most popular office supply stores.

1. At your favorite online store, look or search (using the “Ctrl+F” function) the main page for a recycled products section. Some supply stores have created an entire catalogue devoted to green products!
2. The most important factor at online stores is to include key words such as “recycled” or “remanufactured” or “energy efficient” in the search engine when looking for a specific product.
3. If you prefer to search by clicking on a general category, look for the chasing arrows symbol or other symbols used to label recycled content and other green products.
4. Some sites will not label products, so look for the word “recycled” in the description.
5. Purchasing online yields exceptional variety. There are many specialty shops popping up across the country that offer products that are not just recycled content, but environmentally preferable and less health hazardous as well. Some stores offer everything from office supplies and promotional products to clothing, cleaning, and

gardening supplies. Do a general search for “green supply stores” or “environmentally preferable products” on your Internet search engine to find more resources.

Where to shop for Recycled Content and EPP Products:

Official Recycled Products Guide; www.recyclingmarkets.net

Green Home; www.greenhome.com/

Seventh Generation; www.seventhgeneration.com

Enviro-Solutions; www.enviro-solution.com/index.html

Whole Foods; www.wholefoods.com/

Office Depot, Office Max, Staples, Lowe’s, Home Depot, Target, Harris Teeter

Other Resources

EcoLabels helps consumers decipher among environmentally preferable products and symbols; www.eco-labels.org/home.cfm

For consumer information, visit www.eco-labels.org/greenconsumers/home.cfm

Educational information and outreach; www.newdream.org/buy/

Things to be aware of or look out for:

- You can use the “Ctrl+F” function if a long list of products is returned from your search. You can search an Internet page just like a word document, simply by pressing “Ctrl+F” and typing in “recycled” in the search box.
- Just because the word “green” or “natural” is used in a products description, it does not mean it is environmentally friendly. Some products have “natural scents”, for example, but the product still contains hazardous chemicals that can be irritants or harmful to the environment.
- Consider the percentage of recycled content materials. Generally, because of the demand from the Federal government, products will follow the Comprehensive Procurement Guidelines standards.