

# Making sense of paper labels

You already know that recycled printer paper, bathroom and facial tissues, and paper towels are the greenest choices. But did you know that not all recycled products are created equally?

## Choose goods that leave the most trees in the forest

**Best choice:** **100% PCW (post consumer waste) recycled** products promote energy conservation by reusing resources that have already been extracted and stop more solids from entering the waste stream. (This is what happens to the flyers and envelopes you send to your municipal recycling centre.) Do the best you can — PCW content can vary from 10 to 100 percent.

**Better choice:** **Pre-consumer waste** is made from scraps left over during processing — trim from newspapers, printing overruns, etc. that are reused to make new stuff — and are a better choice than goods made from virgin pulp.

## The whitest isn't always the greenest

**Best choice:** **PCF (processed chlorine-free)** Besides being safer for everyone (chlorine is toxic to produce and poisonous to fish), chlorine-free paper processing uses less water. Alternative whiteners include oxygen bleach, ozone or hydrogen peroxide. PCF goods must contain a minimum of 30 per cent PCW (see above) recycled content and, if they have virgin content, this portion must be TCF (see below).

**Better choice:** **TCF (totally chlorine-free)** No chlorine is used to make these products, but they are comprised of virgin, not recycled, paper.

**Not bad choice:** **ECF (elemental chlorine-free)** products are bleached with a chlorine derivative, such as chlorine dioxide, but toxins such as dioxins, furans and other organochlorines may be produced during their manufacture.

## Consider treeless paper

The growing green movement has led to surging popularity in 'tree free' papers made from cotton, flax, coffee bean residue, agricultural stalks and straw, linen, hemp, bamboo and even elephant poop. There's little regulation in exactly what's in these products, so you may see recycled content ranges from 10 to 100 percent. Be sure what you buy is chlorine-free.

## Look for these logos



### FSC

The Forest Stewardship Council of Canada (FSC) logo means the pulp used to make the paper products comes from a well-managed forest with an intact, healthy ecosystem. <http://www.fsccanada.org>



### Green Seal

Products with the Green Seal logo have been certified by this independent, non-profit organization as being made by environmentally responsible companies.

Look for their logo on paper products, as well as a variety of other things — cleaners, paints, hotels, etc. <http://www.greenseal.org/>

Besides reducing the amount of paper you use (by printing double-sided, using hankies and rags, for example), support companies who reduce packaging and provide recycling information.

### Check out these links:

The Boreal Bird Shopper's Guide [www.borealbirds.org/downloads.shtml](http://www.borealbirds.org/downloads.shtml)  
The National Resources Defence Council [www.nrdc.org/paper](http://www.nrdc.org/paper)  
TreeHugger [www.treehugger.com/files/2008/09/greenpeace-kleenex-boreal-photos.php](http://www.treehugger.com/files/2008/09/greenpeace-kleenex-boreal-photos.php)