

Sustainable Design Checklist from Design Can Change

By [Gail Nickel-Kailing](#) on February 16th, 2009

DESIGN CAN CHANGE

[Design Can Change](#) is an initiative encouraging graphic designers not only to consider the environment when they design projects but to think strategically about sustainability. [Attached is a Sustainable Design Checklist](#) to help you focus your decisions through the design process.

And below are some additional ideas from **Design Can Change** that will supplement the *Checklist* and which should get the ball rolling toward change:

Design and strategy:

- Design for re-use
- Maximize the shelf-life of your design
- Scrutinize the efficiency of your selected method
- Compare the impacts of each concept you develop
- Employ targeted efforts instead of mass mailings
- Do your proofing on-screen
- Encourage rich PDFs for annual reports
- Eliminate blank pages in your booklets and brochures
- Use office scrap paper or a tablet for sketching and brainstorming
- Learn about greenwashing, promise never to engage in it, and call out any product guilty of it

Production:

- Use local vendors who are committed to the environment
- Print on PCW (Post Consumer Waste) stock
- Try running your next project on cotton or kenaf fiber if it's available to you
- Maximize use of the entire press sheet
- Minimize ink coverage
- Learn the words chlorine-free and vegetable-based and insist upon them
- Choose products that are manufactured with renewable energy
- Keep tabs on the latest printing and production technologies
- Avoid transporting printed proofs by using printers with synched and calibrated monitors for review

Your Business:

- Make best use of your website and limit your reliance on printed promotions
- Provide preferential pricing to organizations who embrace sustainability

- Treat your commitment as a competitive advantage in marketing efforts and when bidding on projects
- Become an expert, and counsel your clients on how to become more sustainable in their practices
- Get connected with local environmental groups and pool resources
- Go paperless: invoice digitally or sign-up for online bill notification

Around the Studio:

- Use your knowledge of green design in revamping your workspace
- Recycle all of your computer equipment and ink cartridges
- Use rewritable formats and web services instead of disposable media
- Turn off the lights on a sunny day
- Go vegetarian at lunch
- Get a filter and drink water from your tap
- Walk to meetings, ride a bike or take transit
- Limit use of motorized couriers
- Consider buying energy credits
- Embrace a green lifestyle when you leave the studio

As we all approach sustainability from a different perspective, the best advice is take what you want from this list and leave the rest.