



# REI Sustainable Packaging Guidelines

## OBJECTIVE:

This document outlines REI's sustainable packaging guidelines. Packaging is necessary to protect products while in transit. Packaging may also enhance the customer experience by communicating key information or displaying products in a compelling manner. REI's goal is to minimize the environmental footprint of packaging while ensuring the packaging is effective in serving its purpose. We have adopted high standards for REI brand products, and we encourage our wholesale brand partners to do the same. These guidelines serve as a resource to those ends. Contact [ProductSustainability@rei.com](mailto:ProductSustainability@rei.com) with any questions about this document.



## Design to Reduce Material Use

- Assess to what extent packaging is necessary for product protection.
- Minimize material usage, or eliminate packaging completely.
- Measure and manage the package-to-product ratio and the carton efficiency.
- Minimize cutting waste by evaluating the die-line efficiency of the packaging design.
- Partner with print vendors to develop more efficient designs.



## Design for Reuse

- Design for reuse within and between retail stores, distribution centers and the supply chain.
- Consider and optimize how employees and customers are informed to reuse packaging.
- Determine whether more durable materials are required for effective reuse.
- Ensure reusable packaging is compatible with existing infrastructure.



## Design for Recyclability

- Create packaging compatible with recycling systems used by customers.
- Use single materials to increase recyclability.
- If using multiple materials, ensure they are separable without the use of tools and are clearly identified for recycling purposes.
- Where possible, avoid laminates, films, wax, wet-strength additives, foil stamps, metallic inks, grommets and other materials that reduce recyclability.
- Use the How2Recycle labeling system.



## Choose Sustainable Paper and Paperboard

- Maximize use of certified paper. When using virgin paper, use FSC®-certified paper.
- Use unbleached and acid-free paper.
- Choose [Sustainable Green Printing Partnership](#) printers when possible.
- Do not use poly laminate paper, as it impedes recyclability.



## Choose Sustainable Corrugated Transit Packaging

- Use either FSC®-certified cardboard, certified post-consumer fiber (PCF) cardboard or a combination of both.
- Maximize carton-packing efficiency.
- Use glue instead of staples to improve safety and recycling.
- Default to paper tape for sealing boxes, and use vinyl tape only when necessary.



# REI Sustainable Packaging Guidelines



## Choose Better Plastics

- Maximize use of recycled and recyclable content.
- Use a consistent resin type to increase recyclability (e.g., 100% PET).
- Avoid use of PVC (#3) and PS (#6) rigid or foam, which have limited recycling options in most markets.
- Avoid printing on clear plastics; instead, use an insert card to maintain recyclability.
- Avoid paper and metal foil labels on plastic unless they can be easily separated by the consumer before recycling.
- For biopolymers, request comparative environmental analyses that include supply chain impacts to understand how biopolymers compare with alternative materials.
- For biodegradable and compostable plastics, label clearly to promote proper disposal and reduce contamination of the recycling stream.
- For compostable plastics, require appropriate test results to confirm that all the materials in the item will break down into, or otherwise become part of, usable compost. See [FTC Green Guides](#) for more details.
- For biodegradable plastics, require third party certification to confirm that the entire item will completely break down and return to nature. See [FTC Green Guides](#) for more details.
- For more information on best practices for plastics, see the [APR Design® Guide](#).



## Minimize Polybags

- Avoid individual polybags for items; instead, use one master polybag per case pack.
- If a polybag is necessary, use a bag of appropriate size and thickness to safely transport the item.
- Use polybags made of #2 or #4 clear recyclable plastic film.
- Avoid polybags that contain PVC.
- Use the How2Recycle labeling system.



## REI SHIPPING AND RECEIVING REQUIREMENTS

- Use only unprinted paper packing material or air pillows.
- **DO NOT** use plastics, expanded polystyrene, shredded paper or printed newspaper.
- For details on REI's shipping and receiving requirements at the distribution centers, please review the Vendor Guide on the [REI Partner's site](#).



# REI Sustainable Packaging Guidelines

## GUIDANCE FOR ADHESIVES, COATINGS, INKS AND BLEACHING PROCESS

Least Preferred -----> Most Preferred



### ADHESIVES

#### VOC Emitting

- Typically harmful for workers and environment

#### Certified Non-VOC

- No volatile organic compounds (VOCs)

#### None

- Preferred because it avoids the use of chemicals and allows for easier packaging recycling



### COATINGS

#### Lamination (Foil & Poly)

- Uses adhesives
- Creates mixed materials
- Involves additional processes
- May contain restricted substances

#### Overprint Varnish

- Solvent-based
- VOC emissions and may pose a health hazard for press operator

#### Water/Aqueous-Based

- Emits fewer VOCs than solvent-based varnishes

#### UV Coating

- No VOCs
- High performance
- Protects printed surface from UV damage

#### No Coating

- Preferred because it avoids the use of chemicals and resources



### INKS

#### Metallic Ink

- May contain restricted substances
- May contain aluminum, mica and bronze powders that contaminate the recycling process and require more intensive cleaning process for printing equipment,

#### Petroleum-Based

- Likely emits VOCs

#### Water-Based

- Low VOCs
- Enables flexographic printing processes that utilize less energy than traditional lithographic printing
- Water based inks can be harder to remove from the paper fibers in recycling

#### Soy & Vegetable-Based

- Natural oil-based, avoid petroleum-based; easiest to separate from fibers
- Avoid heavy metal dyes and pigments
- Production of primary medium requires land use
- May contain small amounts of petroleum
- prefer compostable inks

#### No Ink

- Preferred because it avoids the use of chemicals and resources



### BLEACH PROCESS

#### Chlorine Bleaching

- Bleached using elemental chlorine
- In the United States, elemental chlorine was phased out as of April 2001, per the EPA's Cluster Rule

#### Traditional ECF

- Replaces elemental chlorine with chlorine dioxide in the bleaching process

#### "Enhanced" Chlorine Free (ECF)

- Removes more of the lignin from the wood before bleaching, thereby reducing energy and chemical use during bleaching

#### Totally Chlorine Free (TCF) Bleached

- Virgin paper produced without chlorine or chlorine derivatives (the bleaching process uses oxygen-based compounds)

#### Processed Chlorine Free (PCF)

- Uses totally chlorine free processing and includes recycled fiber content. Both the recycled fiber and any virgin fiber are bleached without chlorine or chlorine compounds

#### Unbleached Paper/Board

- Preferred due to the absence of resources and chemical processes



# REI Sustainable Packaging Guidelines

## HOW2RECYCLE LABEL

We believe the How2Recycle labeling system is the most effective, scalable means for communicating about recyclability of packaging to REI's consumers. REI has adopted it for our own brand's packaging.

The How2Recycle label aims to clarify recyclability of packaging components for consumers. The How2Recycle label is a voluntary, standardized labeling system that clearly communicates recycling instructions to the public.

The goals of the How2Recycle label are to:

- Reduce confusion by creating a clear, well-understood and nationally harmonized label that enables industry to convey to consumers how to recycle a package.
- Improve the reliability, completeness and transparency of recyclability claims.
- Provide a labeling system that follows Federal Trade Commission Green Guides.
- Increase the availability and quality of recycled material.

To learn more about adding the label to packaging, visit <http://www.how2recycle.info>.



## REFERENCES

- How2Recycle: <http://www.how2recycle.info>
- REI Restricted Substances List (RSL): <http://www.rei.com/stewardship>
- FTC recycled claims: <https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/press-releases/ftc-issues-revised-green-guides/greenguides.pdf>
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)® Forest Management Certification: [www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org)
- Post-Consumer Recycled Content ISO 14021:2016: [http://www.iso.org/iso/home/store/catalogue\\_ics/catalogue\\_detail\\_ics.htm?csnumber=66652](http://www.iso.org/iso/home/store/catalogue_ics/catalogue_detail_ics.htm?csnumber=66652)
- Sustainable Packaging Coalition: <http://www.sustainablepackaging.org>
- Association of Plastics Recyclers: <http://www.plasticsrecycling.org>

**NOTE:** This document is based on the Outdoor Industry Association's Packaging Guidelines.