Society of Graphic Designers of Canada

Société des designers graphiques du Canada
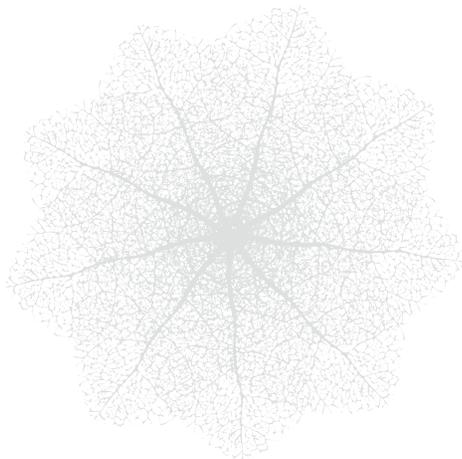
Environmental Best Practices Guide

This guide is intended to provide best practices in sustainable design while assisting GDC members in articulating environmental options to their clients.

The materials and energy used in design activities come from the planet's ecological systems. Sustainable design must use resources in a quantity and a manner that will not deplete, pollute or otherwise harm the source.

There are multiple solutions that could be considered 'sustainable' for any project. Critical planning is important to determine the most appropriate course of action for a specific design project.

Best practices evolve with research, improved technologies and techniques. Please check back regularly for the most current version of the GDC Environmental Best Practices Guide.

For more information on sustainable design practice, visit
www.gdc.net/sustainability

PROJECT PLANNING

- Gain a thorough understanding of your client's needs
- Design recyclable products
- Design to fulfill multiple uses
- Recommend digital approaches where appropriate
- Talk to clients about how to leverage sustainable efforts
- Consider all impacts before design begins (printing, transportation, warehousing, recyclability, etc)
- Avoid designing messages that encourage over consumption
- Understand your client's mission and vision and their current level of commitment to sustainability
- Talk to your printer about reducing or eliminating heavy metals in ink
- Talk to your printer about environment-friendly printing options while planning

TRANSPORTATION

- Consider all inputs used to produce and transport products (water, energy, etc.)
- Consider paper weight and size in assessing transportation and warehousing
- Use local vendors to reduce transportation impacts
- Consider distribution and mailing costs

In the spirit of reducing paper use, we've designed this document to be used on screen with interactive check boxes.

DESIGN

- Reduce or eliminate the use of foils
- Reduce ink coverage
- Use narrower margins
- Consider compressed or light typefaces
- Reduce or eliminate bleeds
- Size for efficient sheet use
- Minimize packaging size
- Use white space judiciously
- Reduce the need for envelopes
- Select products produced in your immediate area
- Design products for a long life and broad use

PRINTING

- Purchase papers produced from sustainably-managed forests and post consumer waste
- Use chlorine-free paper products
- Use recycled papers containing post-consumer waste
- Use standardized paper sizes
- Consider separate language editions
- Choose the lightest weight of paper necessary
- Discuss with paper supplier if a custom order can reduce waste
- Reduce print quantities and use print-on-demand strategies
- Choose recyclable varnishes
- Choose VOC-free adhesives