

TIME

Greenwashing: Nearly all products' eco-friendly claims are bogus or misleading

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More and more "green" products are entering the marketplace. And more and more, the labels claiming that a product is green, eco-friendly, or otherwise good for the environment are fairly meaningless.

The [LA Times](#) is the latest publication to explore the unfortunate, all-too-common modern scenario in which a consumer wants to do good by the environment, but is unsure which—if any—of the many "green" products on store shelves actually live up to their eco-friendly billing.

In a [TerraChoice study from last fall](#), there was a 73% increase in the number of items sold by retailers that claim green status. Overall, researchers found, 95% of these products committed at least one "greenwashing" sin—meaning marketers and manufacturers were overstating or misleading consumers as to how truly environmentally friendly the product or service is.

Buying a truly green product, then, is not nearly as simple as finding one that says it's a green product. Confusing things further is the presence of certain badges (one has a green leaf) that advertisers use in commercials—but which are bestowed on products simply if they pay a fee, with no

requirements whatsoever that the product is actually good for the environment. One expert quoted by the LA Times chimed in with thoughts on such practices:

"An Eco-label that promises advertisers a green image while telling them they don't need to do anything to earn that image is the very definition of greenwashing," said Michael Green, executive director of the Center for Environmental Health, in a statement.

Here's one truth that manufacturers and marketers selling "green" products won't go out of their way to tell you: Often, one of the truly greenest things you can do is make do with what you already have and not buy more stuff.