

Greenwashing: What does it mean and how to avoid it

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As more and more people become aware of current environmental issues, more and more companies try to promote their new and improved “green” products or initiatives. While viewing items, such as new cleaning products that claim to be environmentally safe, we must take more notice to the ingredients within these products and make that decision ourselves. For instance, many companies try to get away with promoting a product as being eco-friendly even if it is not totally true. This is so common that there is actually a term for it, which is “greenwashing”.

So what does this exactly mean? The definition of this term, found on [Green Peace website](#), is when companies “[mislead] consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service”. This term was first coined around 1990 when companies such as DuPont, Chevron, Bechtel, the American Nuclear Society, and the Society of Plastics Industry, which are known to be some of the worst polluting companies in America, promoted themselves as being eco-friendly. (source: [stopgreenwash.org](#))

Whole Foods Market, which can be found off of North Dale Mabry Highway in Tampa,

started a new Eco-Scale Rating System in order to help consumers choose which household cleaning products are best for them. Using a color system range with green, yellow, orange, and red, where green means most eco-friendly and red means the worst for the environment, is how the store rates these products; however, you won’t see any red items because Whole Foods will not even have them available for purchase.

Since Whole Foods has taken it upon themselves to rate products, we should see this as a practice that we should adopt ourselves as consumers. Do not take a company’s word for it when they claim to be “green”. [TerraChoice](#), a North America environmental marketing agency that helps companies develop more sustainable products, found that there are 73% more eco-friendly products on the market today, compared to 2009, where 4.5% are “sin-free”. Therefore, there are still more than 95% of consumer products out there claiming to be “green” while still committing at least one of the [seven sins](#) of “greenwashing”. Therefore, do your research or look for a legitimate certification on the product’s label. You can find more information about how to avoid “greenwashing” and what to look for from the [Greenwashing Report 2010](#).