You Being “Greenwashed?” Here’s What It Means, And How to Avoid It.

Greenwashing. The word sounds harmless, and even a little eco-friendly, doesn’t it! Unfortunately, however, greenwashing is something that’s environmentally unhealthy. It refers to dishonest marketing techniques designed to fool end users into thinking that a product is green when it actually isn’t.The word “greenwashing” is an environmental version of whitewashing, which refers to the concealing of unethical practices through biased presentations of facts. Surprisingly, the practice of greenwashing is alive and well today – even in our skeptical, savvy society.

The unethical practices of greenwashing have been exposed by TerraChoice Environmental Marketing in their [“7 Sins of Greenwashing”](https://app.leadfreak.ai/c1.pl?84717a73eece6d16a423d331a8140e00af8bfb380b422dbe) report, as well as by Ed Gillespie in his [“Ten Signs of Greenwashing."](https://app.leadfreak.ai/c1.pl?646795b0bf65808724532af81056d8924a8e6452f8f6d3fe) In this article, we combine elements from both reports to give you the best explanations of greenwashing.

Here are 10 greenwashing practices being used today:**1. Hidden Trade-Off, AKA “**Green Product Vs. Dirty Company.” **Some cleaning products are labeled** “eco-friendly” because of one small aspect of the manufacturing process (like “recycled fibers”), while hiding environmentally harmful manufacturing processes (like gas emissions.)**2. Lack of Proof. Have you ever seen a “green” claim without any supporting proof or even a modicum of evidence? Well, that’s a problem. Legitimate claims offer evidence right on the product’s label, or on the manufacturer’s website. If you find yourself wondering if a claim is true, it probably isn’t.3. Vagueness, AKA “Fluffy Language.” Many products**use words that are not defined well. The list of fluffy language includes things like “biodegradable,” “all-natural,” “non-toxic,” “phosphate free,” “environmentally friendly,” and “recycled.”

**4. Irrelevant Claims. Some manufacturers highlight**a feature that, while maybe true, has no bearing on the product’s environmental friendliness. TerraChoice points out “CFC-Free” as an irrelevant claim. Since CFCs are banned by law, the “CFC-Free” claim is not legitimate.**5. Lesser of Two Evils, AKA “Best In Class.” This greenwashing tactic happens when a manufacturer** claims to be greener than competing products, even though the product category as a whole is environmentally unfriendly. As Ed Gillespie states, this tactic happens when a manufacturer declares that they’re slightly greener than the rest, even if the rest are pretty terrible.**6. Outright Lying,**AKA totally made-up claims. (Yes, this really happens.)**7. False Labels, AKA “Imaginary Friends.” Another form of outright lying, this is when a label displays** a fake third-party certification.

**8. Jargon,** AKA “Gobbledygook.” This is pretty much what it sounds like: Information and jargon that not even a scientist could understand.

**9. Just Not Credible.** This is a claim that highlights environmentally friendly attributes of a clearly dangerous product.

**10.** **Suggestive Pictures.**You have probably seen images on product labels that imply a baseless green impact. Ed Gillespie gives the example of showing flowers issuing from the exhaust pipe of a vehicle.

**How To Avoid Being Greenwashed**

Fortunately, it isn’t that difficult to protect yourself form being greenwashed. You simply need to look for authenticthird-party certification! You can’t go wrong with ECOLOGO certified products or Green Seal certified products. Information about Green Seal can be found [here](https://app.leadfreak.ai/c1.pl?109020d5a7639a132f8d6c156405f3c2f5644219194b15dc), and information about ECOLOGO can be found [here.](https://app.leadfreak.ai/c1.pl?596d88fbe8fd58212e9a2032e111bc35c8f079dc3026e91e) Making sure your cleaning products are verified by either of these two organizations will give you peace of mind that you’re getting exactly what you pay for.