

16 Eco-Friendly Terms You Need to Know

The processes, programs, products and practices every design professional needs to recognize.



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More and more, clients demand that interior designers and architects incorporate sustainable design principles, practices and products into their projects. But what do all these eco-buzzwords really

mean? We'll help you wade through the green jungle by spotlighting the eco-lingo you should know.

Processes

- **Adaptive reuse:** the process of adapting or redeveloping old structures for new uses to reduce sprawl, preserve historically significant architecture and conserve resources.
- **Biodegradable:** a material that breaks down with the assistance of micro-organisms.
- **Carbon footprint:** the accumulated greenhouse gases your activities produce (and how they affect global warming). Calculate your personal carbon footprint at carbonfootprint.com.
- **Degradable:** material that breaks down through chemical reactions rather than through the activity of micro-organisms.
- **Graywater:** effluent from the shower, bath, sinks and washing machines (does not contain sewage) that may be reused for flushing toilets and watering lawns.
- **Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS):** describes an estimated \$209 billion U.S. market segment focused on health, the environment, social justice, personal development and sustainable living. Approximately 19 percent of the adults in the United States, or 41 million people, are currently considered LOHAS consumers. LOHAS companies practice "responsible capitalism" by providing goods and services using economic and environmentally sustainable business practices.
- **Passive solar heating and cooling:** designs that use the sun's energy to heat and cool by taking advantage of natural energy characteristics. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, passive solar design strategies, such as strategically placed windows, can cut heating bills by as much as 50 percent.
- **Phantom load:** household electrical items that use energy when turned off. To lighten the load, homeowners should unplug rarely used appliances and unused chargers, and unplug all appliances and electronics when going out of town.
- **Sustainability:** products or practices that don't harm the environment, are produced with a minimal amount of energy and packaging, and may be refurbished or recycled after use.

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Programs

- **ENERGY STAR[®]:** a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy that identifies energy-efficient products and practices. In 2007, Americans using ENERGY STAR-certified products avoided greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 27 million cars — while saving \$16 billion in utility bills. Learn more about ENERGY STAR.
- **Forest Stewardship Council:** a nonprofit organization that sets high standards for the environmental, social and economic management of forests. FSC-certified products must meet or exceed these standards.
- **Green Label:** the Carpet and Rug Institute gives this designation to low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) carpet, cushions and adhesives. The very lowest-VOC products are labeled Green Label Plus.
- **Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System[™]:** a third-party certification program and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. LEED gives buildings