



Planet Positive Beauty Guide

How to make greener beauty choices



Introduction

Our planet is in a code red situation

A recent study of 23,000 beauty shoppers found **almost half (48%) are looking for more information and clarity about brands' values and commitments to the environment**¹. Ingredients, recyclability of packaging and animal welfare were amongst the most frequently searched topics. Making ethical beauty choices can be difficult. In fact, 61% of us **struggle to tell if hair and skincare products are ethical from the packaging**².

It is clear shoppers want their beauty routines to 'go easier on the planet', but they don't know where to start.

The first thing to be clarified is definitions. Buzzwords such as 'cruelty free', 'sustainable' and 'net zero' can be interpreted in different ways. There is also a lot of confusion around identifying which ingredients are good and **which simply sound good**.

¹ Research carried out by Provenance of 23,000 Cult Beauty shoppers in 2019 and 2020

² Poll of 2,000 adults conducted by We Do in June 2021

Introducing the Planet Positive Beauty Guide

Together with independent experts from across the industry, The British Beauty Council's Sustainable Beauty Coalition has developed the **Planet Positive Beauty Guide** to decode the jargon with straightforward descriptions of the words most often used by the beauty industry – helping you understand some of the key issues and suggesting some things to look for.

Think of your favourite beauty product: a moisturiser, lipstick or mascara. **A product you simply 'cannot live without'**. How much do you know about this product? What ingredients is it made of? How is it sourced, packaged, and produced? What do you know about the company that produces it? How do they treat their employees and suppliers? This guide asks crucial questions that will ultimately help steer you towards making greener and more sustainable choices.

Foreword

The Tide is Turning

More and more of us want to ‘do the right thing’. We want to make smarter and more sustainable consumption choices so that we tread more lightly on the planet.

After a year and a half of living in a global pandemic – often referred to as ‘The Great Pause’ – **we have been gifted the time to think about the products we want to consume and the brands we want to support** – kind to people and also to the planet.

The challenge, however, is steering a path through a mist of confusion. What do all those baffling and jargon-filled claims mean? Is ‘natural’ really natural? What exactly is ‘zero waste’? How can we be sure something that says it is organic IS organic? And a concern that bothers most beauty-hounds: how can we be sure our products have not harmed animals, en route to our bathroom shelf or make-up bag?

None of us want to fall prey to greenwashing by having the wool pulled over our eyes by brands with flimsy eco-credentials. Indeed, this is what drove the British Beauty Council to create the Planet Positive Beauty Guide. The organisation is magnetising key figures from across the worlds of haircare, skincare and make-up to work together to find clever solutions to the challenges of creating more sustainable lotions, potions and packaging for us all to enjoy.

There is absolutely no question that beauty plays an important role in our well-being. The rituals of applying make-up or massaging in a body lotion – never mind lying back in scented, warm waters – helps us rebalance and recharge. Cleansing, moisturising, and shaving can sometimes be the only time we have to ourselves. By applying the tools provided in the Planet Positive Beauty Guide, **we can enjoy these simple pleasures without harming the planet.**

Because you know, it really is all about the planet, the inanimate lump of rock we happen to live on. Some years ago, the environmentalist Vandana Shiva was asked: ‘Do you think it’s too late to save the planet?’ She smiled sagely and replied: **‘The planet will be fine without us’.**

The following pages demystify the world of sustainable beauty, offering a brilliant how-to for everyone who wants to enjoy their beauty rituals without adding a large dollop of eco-guilt along with their bath oil.

The world of beauty takes such good care of us. Now it is our time to show we care...

Jo Fairley

JOINT EDITOR, BEAUTY BIBLE

Introduction

What is Greenwashing and Why Should We Care?

“As there are no harmonised criteria to define the properties of natural and organic cosmetics at an international level, it is difficult for producers and shoppers to evaluate whether ‘natural’ or ‘organic’ product claims can be considered misleading. Conventional and nature-inspired products may make claims (for instance, ‘made with rose oil’) use images, iconography and other forms of marketing that draw attention to a limited number of natural ingredients rather than the product as a whole. Such natural ingredients may be present in the finished product, but only in very low concentrations relative to the proportions of non-natural substances.

This malpractice, called ‘greenwashing’ can be seen not only in the misleading use of claims such as ‘natural’ and/or ‘organic’ but also ‘environmentally friendly’ or ‘green’. Greenwashing not only means shoppers are making what they think are ‘green’ choices which can actively be harming the environment, it also drains credibility from brands genuinely dedicated to sustainability and being environmentally friendly.”

Jayn Sterland

CHAIR OF THE SUSTAINABLE
BEAUTY COALITION



Contents

01 Ingredients

Page 05

03 People

Page 13

02 Packaging

Page 09

04 Sustainable Sourcing

Page 16

01

Ingredients



Ingredients

Most green claims made in the ingredients category are not regulated so there is widespread confusion surrounding definitions and most importantly why they matter. Knowing what your favourite beauty products are made of and their impact, environmentally and socially, is important. We recommend looking for certifications to third-party standards to **ensure the brands you are buying are using their ingredient claims in an honest and clear way** (as certifications and third-party standards have independent testing measures to ensure quality and consistency).

Because definitions such as 'natural' are not regulated, products can sometimes include ingredients that are more irritating and harmful than those they are trying to exclude. Products labelled 'all natural' capture the importance of knowing what to look out for.

Think about what ingredients matter to you and do your research. Brands will rarely tick all the boxes but knowing what you are looking for can help you make informed choices. A good place to start is to look for recommendations through independent consumer testing bodies such as **Which?** or [Ethical Consumer](#). To learn more about the requirements behind the ingredient-related claims and certifications you come across, explore the [Provenance Framework](#), an open-source rulebook to help brands communicate impact and avoid greenwashing.

Greenwashing means shoppers are making what they think are 'green' choices, when in fact, their choices could have a negative effect on the environment rather than positive.

Problematically, this drains credibility from honest brands that are genuinely trying to be have a positive impact.

Things to look out for



Microplastic

Microplastics are small pieces of plastics (typically under 5.5mm) contained in beauty products (amongst other things) that are rinsed away with wastewater during use, which means they ultimately end up in the ocean. Plastic degrades into smaller and smaller pieces over tens or even hundreds of years. This means that all plastic that has ever been produced and has ended up in the environment is still present there in one form or another. The impact this has on sea life, wildlife and human life is still being researched.

Liquid microplastics are found in various cosmetics such as eyeliners, mascara, lipsticks, powders and skincare products. Each use may contain up to 100,000 tiny plastic particles. To make sure that products are completely free of any microplastic ingredients, you need a guarantee so look for the Zero Plastic Inside logo. On average, a human being absorbs up to five grams of plastic per week via the diet, which is roughly the weight of a credit card. The UK-wide ban on microbeads in rinse-off products scrubs (shampoo or shower gel) only solves half the problem, particularly as it does not cover leave-on cosmetics (make-up).



Against Animal Testing/Cruelty Free

In an area where there has been considerable confusion amongst consumers, claims around animal testing should cover both finished product testing and all of the ingredients where the majority of testing takes place.

Despite action to end animal testing for cosmetics here in the UK, there are still issues with ingredients being tested for example, under other chemicals legislation. Animal testing is also allowed in other countries outside Europe where companies may choose to sell their products.

Until there is a global end to animal testing on cosmetics, and non-animal methods become widely accepted and implemented worldwide, you need to be vigilant. Supporting companies who have clear stances against animal testing or campaign actively against it is a good start.

Also, look out for products that are approved under the Leaping Bunny programme, operated by Cruelty Free International. Brands must meet rigorous criteria which apply globally and extend over and above laws governing animal testing, and only then can they display the Leaping Bunny logo.



Natural

This is a popular and broadly used term. Although, with no official regulatory definition, it is hard to say for certain whether a product is natural. It is therefore important to look for products with a certification seal such as [NATRUE](#) or the [Soil Association](#) as this can provide defined guarantees for natural cosmetics based on a rigorous criteria.



Organic

An organic product uses ingredients that were grown and processed without the use of manufactured herbicides and artificial fertilisers, and refers to certified farming practices and food products made using legally defined rules. This term is not legally protected on cosmetics and beauty products, but to help to guide you can look out for certified products with the [COSMOS](#) (as certified by the Soil Association) and [NATRUE](#) seals. Both seals' criteria is found in their private standards and ensure a minimum percentage of the ingredients came from certified organic agriculture.

Biodynamic

This is a product made using biodynamically grown ingredients. This farming system is 'super-organic' in that it is an organic farming system which also manages biodiversity and takes into account the holistic farming system.



Vegan

The term vegan means a product does not contain any animal products (like dairy or honey) and none were involved in the production process. If you want to find 100% vegan products, look for independent certification from a body such as [The Vegan Society's Vegan Trademark](#) (which checks that products are both free from animal ingredients and have not been tested on animals), and check with the brand to ensure the product or packaging is free from any animal produce.



Palm Oil

Palm oil is a vegetable oil extracted from either the fruits (palm oil) or kernels (palm kernel oil) of palm trees, it remains a highly production 'efficient' ingredient and is used in many different products from bodycare, skincare and haircare. Palm oil has many benefits: grown sustainably it produces more oil per area of land than other oil crops, but there have been issues caused by deforestation and human rights abuses due to the rapid growth of the industry. Choose Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) or Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO) which can be sourced for both oils and products of these oils. You may also want to look out for the [Orangutan Alliance Certification](#) to be sure the products you are buying don't contain palm oil.



Vegetarian

Products that do not contain any ingredients or use production processes that are the result of animal slaughter. If you want 100% vegetarian products you should look for an independent standard or certification from a body such as [The Vegetarian Society](#), check certification to a third-party standard or check with the brand you are buying that none of their ingredients or packaging use animals.

Vegan and vegetarian claims are often thought to be synonymous with promoting animal welfare, but they cannot be assumed to be natural, organic or less harmful to the planet unless verified.

02

Packaging



Packaging

With 95% of packaging thrown away, packaging is one of the biggest sustainability challenges facing the beauty industry.

Whilst beautiful packaging can be enticing, it is not unusual for cosmetics to end up with more packaging than product, and the waste and the cost is staggering. Recycling single-use plastics is not necessarily the answer, as it can take up to 450 years for some types of plastic to break down. Yet when it comes to the beauty industry, only **14% of packaging actually makes it to a recycling plant, only 9% is recycled³ and the rest heads directly to landfill.**

Everyone can play a part towards living a more sustainable life, but businesses should set an example by making sustainability an easier choice for everyone. Having packaging at the forefront of your buying decision directly impacts how brands sell their products. As a result, **many brands are committing to 100% recyclable packaging by 2025 in line with the UK Plastics Pact.**

³ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/plastic-produced-recycling-waste-ocean-trash-debris-environment>, December 2018

So how can you make a difference?

- 01 Finish and wash products where possible before recycling packaging and only buying what you *need*
- 02 Switch to products with packaging that can be guaranteed kerbside recyclable such as glass, paper, cardboard, steel and aluminium
- 03 Look for 'naked products' with a minimal amount of packaging, or none at all (think shampoo bars or Konjac sponges)
- 04 Buy products that use refillable and reusable packaging
- 05 Send unwanted products and gifts to a food bank or charities such as Beauty Banks, Toiletries Amnesty or The Hygiene Bank

Materials and claims to look out for



The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting socially beneficial, environmentally appropriate, and economically viable management of the world's forests. FSC is widely seen as the best standard but these days there is little to choose between PEFC and FSC particularly with respect to European sources. FSC and PEFC take precautions to make sure that a forest is harvested at a sustainable rate. As trees are vital in our global action on climate, it is important to buy wood products and cardboard cartons for beauty packaging that bear the FSC or PEFC label whenever possible.

Al

Aluminium

Aluminium is lightweight, rust-proof and can be infinitely recycled without deteriorating in quality. Most aluminium is successfully recycled and over 75% of all aluminium ever extracted from the earth is still in use today.⁴

⁴<https://www.aluminum.org/industries/production/recycling>

Biodegradable

Biodegradable (not to be confused with 'compostable') is a material that is capable of decomposing with the aid of microorganisms, such as fungi and bacteria. There is no official certification for biodegradability. Almost everything biodegrades eventually, though the material may still be hazardous to the environment once broken down.

PET

PET (also PETE) is a general-purpose thermoplastic plastic material and is the most recycled and reusable of all plastics. It is commonly used for bottles and containers for food, drinks and cosmetics. Coloured PET is much harder to recycle, so try to buy clear bottles when possible.



Plastic Free

The product contains no fossil fuel plastic. You can reduce your plastic footprint by buying plastic free products. Look out for the Plastic Free official certification to ensure that a product or packaging is 100% plastic free.

Polypropylene (PP)

PP is made from thermoplastic commonly used to make products that need to be waterproof, heat proof and strong. These can include cosmetics tubes, reusable water bottles, toys and car parts like bumpers. Although it is technically recyclable, only 1% of PP is recycled globally.

Reusable / Refillable

Packaging is defined as reusable when it is capable of being used repeatedly for the same use case without impairing its protective function. We are starting to see a revolution in refill and reusable packaging for personal care products such as shampoo, shower gels and even mascara which will help us to reduce waste and dependency on single-use products and packaging.

Zero Waste/ Waste Zero

We create two billion tonnes of waste every year and the zero-waste movement has grown rapidly to address this. The way to think about it is a waste zero approach to product design which will include a set of principles: responsible production, consumption, reuse and recovery of all products, packaging, and materials, without burning them, and without discharges to land, water or air. Look out for products that have been designed using Cradle to Cradle principles or certification.

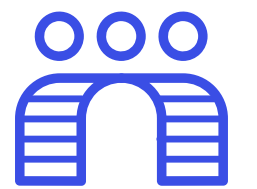
Recyclable

For a product's packaging to be recyclable, it must have the potential to be recycled into another useful product. However, this does not guarantee it will be recycled, as some materials are simply not cost-effective to do so. Some materials are kerbside recyclable while others have to be taken to a specific collection location. Avoid products that use flexible thin and multi-layered plastics as they are very difficult to recycle, as are coloured plastics. Small packaging items such as lipsticks and mascaras will also not be recycled if placed with household recycling. Look out for the 'On Pack Recycling Label' icons on packaging to provide a steer on what can and cannot be recycled at home.

Where an item can't, or it's not clear, look out for a growing number of in-store take-back schemes– the [WRAP Recycling Locator Tool](#) is a great resource (filter on 'Where to recycle a specific material' and then 'Beauty & grooming').

03

People



People

Whilst the planet is at the heart of sustainability, you cannot get there without a fair and sustainable society.

People are at the heart of this, and planet positive brands have a responsibility to society, too.

You must decide what is important to you when it comes to social responsibility. Most companies will have a code of conduct, relating to people, planet, or product. By looking at this, you can check whether a company aligns with your values.

How do I know that my favourite brands are ethical and how they treat their people?

The word ethical is difficult to define. It is used to describe companies who are conscious of people or planet with their trade practices, but common sense would dictate that this should not be celebrated as 'ethical' but should instead be the norm.

No company should be trading from an unethical position, and we have the right to expect this as the norm from the companies we interact with.

But as shoppers, **how** can we make sure we're supporting brands and products that treat people fairly? In this section we've decoded some of the key terms to look out for to ensure that the products you buy help contribute to a more positive environment, both for the planet, and the people living in it.

Key Concepts

Inclusive Beauty

Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter is a political and social movement used to highlight and fight against racism, discrimination and inequality experienced by black people. In the cosmetics industry, it's important to have cosmetics that are suitable for people of all ethnicities. From representation within the brand's marketing through to having products suitable for all ethnicities - when choosing cosmetics, consider how inclusive the brand is.

LGBTQIA+

This stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex and Asexual - in other words, people outside of the binary spectrum. 'Pride' is an umbrella term for celebrations that encourage people to be proud of their sexuality and gender identity. Choosing to support brands that celebrate acceptance and who are inclusive with their product offering all year round will help champion diversity in beauty. Look for brands that support LGBTQIA+ charities and causes, either via campaign products, direct donations or brand activism.

Some things to look out for



Real Living Wage

A living wage is when a worker's net income allows them to support their household with a decent standard of living. This amount varies depending on their location, employment pattern and who is in their household. This is completely different from government 'minimum' wages, which do not set a benchmark for standard of living and are usually lower than the 'living' wage. If you want to find a brand whose workers are paid a living wage, look for the 'Real Living Wage' foundation mark.



Fair Tax

Fair tax means that companies pay the right amount of tax in the right place at the right time, according to both the letter and the spirit of the law. **The Fair Tax Mark** accreditation scheme originated in the UK in 2014, but now operates across the world. A Fair Tax Mark certified business demonstrates a substantive commitment to responsible tax conduct, financial transparency and beneficial ownership disclosure. There must be a binding tax policy that explicitly shuns tax avoidance and the artificial use of tax havens, and no recent evidence of contradicting activities.

04

Sustainable Sourcing



Sustainable Sourcing

Sustainable sourcing is more than ingredients and packaging; it brings together all of the elements needed to make the world a fairer place to live and work.

The ultimate goal is to build strong, long-term relationships with suppliers. Improving performance in environmental, social and ethical issues is becoming a major part of the overall process. Social responsibility covers many areas and whether an organisation is legally mandated to have a code of conduct or not, every organisation should have one. A code has value as both an internal guideline and an external statement of corporate values and commitments.

These commitments are a good starting point to ensure that everyone in the supply chain is treated fairly and may include things like real living wages, participation in Fair Trade, no discrimination rules, regular employment is provided among others. **Finding out if the company you buy from has these in place will tell you a lot about the way a company is run** and whether they place as much value on people and the planet as they do on profit.

So how do you know?

As a first step, you could ask the organisation or simply search ‘does [insert company name] have an ethical code of conduct?’ on the internet.

Look for 3rd party verification such as **B Corp**, **UEBT** and **Cradle to Cradle**. These are multi attribute certifications which promote the highest social and environmental responsibility through their scoring system.

Terms and claims to look out for

Biodiversity

All the different kinds of life you'll find in one area—the variety of animals, plants, fungi, and even microorganisms like bacteria that make up our natural world and work together in ecosystems, to maintain balance and support life. Biodiversity supports everything in nature that we need to survive such as food, clean water, medicine, and shelter. Look out for companies who actively support and create biodiversity through their business practises.



Cradle to Cradle

Cradle to Cradle Certified® is the global standard for products that are circular and responsibly made. They assess the safety, circularity and responsibility of materials and products across five categories of sustainability performance: material health, product circularity, clean air & protection, water & soil stewardship and social fairness. Look out for this seal of approval to help make your buying choices easier.



B Corp (Better Corporations)

Companies who are B Corp certified are legally bound to consider environmental and social stakeholders in their decision-making. You can be assured that B Corp certified companies are committed to having a positive purpose at the core of their company. You can support these types of companies by choosing a B Corp brand.



Carbon Footprint

A carbon assessment evaluates the direct and indirect greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. A company's carbon footprint represents the amount of carbon dioxide or other carbon compounds emitted into the atmosphere by the activities of the company in question. It is a key element in helping companies reduce their emissions. The lower a company's carbon footprint the better! It is important that companies set ambitious goals, and even better 'science-based targets' to ensure their goals are measurable, verifiable and in line with what the latest climate science says is necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement – to limit global warming to well-below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.



Carbon Neutral

When the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere by a brand and / or a product are exactly 'balanced' by the amount of greenhouse gases it sequesters from the atmosphere (via greenhouse gas removals and / or credible carbon offsetting projects). Look at the transparency of any claims made including Carbon Footprint disclosure, what is and is not included, any carbon offsetting projects they have supported etc – for example sometimes claims are just made about immediate company activities and do not cover the products they sell. There are a number of third-party certifications available such as the [CarbonNeutral®](#) certification.



Transparent

Transparency is about being honest and open with shoppers about how businesses source products and the impact they have on people and the planet. This is important as it's easy for larger brands to hide the damage they are doing to the planet. Look to see if a brand is transparent about their suppliers, labour practices, ingredients and packaging to understand its impact on the planet. You can usually find this information on a brand's website - or if it's not clear, look to their social media channels or simply ask the question - you have a right to know.



Net Zero

Technically this means the same as Carbon Neutral, however this is increasingly being used to describe a much more ambitious and rigorous goal. A company can achieve Net Zero status by taking all action possible to decarbonise its impacts and 'balance' only the emissions that are unfeasible to avoid or reduce by investing in carbon offsetting projects such as [Earthly](#).



UEBT

The Union for Ethical Bio Trade is a non-profit organisation that provides a globally recognised standard for sustainable sourcing and the use of raw materials. In order for a brand to be certified, the UEBT looks at its entire sourcing system to verify that biodiversity is conserved, ingredients are sourced sustainably, and that all partners along the supply chain are treated equitably and paid fairly. Look out for the 'Sourcing with Respect' on pack.

Regenerative farming practices

Regenerative farming practices (eg: biodynamic farming) seek to improve soil fertility, water quality or biodiversity and with the aim to reduce the carbon footprint of farming. It is important that companies work to support the regeneration of soil as opposed to exploitation in their product creation. Without healthy land, nothing grows – including many of the ingredients used in our favourite beauty products.

Easy Swaps

A small list of easy swaps beauty customers can make to be more planet positive:

Wipes

Washable face cloth

Cotton wool

Reusable, washable cotton pads

Sheet masks

Multi-use masks

Shower gel

Soap bar

Shampoo & conditioner bottle

Shampoo & conditioner bar

Single use sanitary pads or tampons

Reusable pads, period pants or menstrual cup

Plastic throw away razor

Bamboo razor with swappable blade

Plastic toothpicks and floss

Bamboo toothpicks and natural floss

Lip balms and deodorants in plastic

Lip balms and deodorants in compostable card packs

Try to avoid all single use beauty items

Go for bigger sizes where you can

What does the future hold?

We all want to buy beauty products that are created in harmony with nature, that protect the environment and make us feel good in every way.

Following the launch of this guide, the **Sustainable Beauty Coalition** will explore how industry guidelines and commitments can work in unison to make British beauty as responsible and ethical as possible.

It takes a planet full of people making small changes to make a big difference, so let's start making more planet positive choices for ourselves and our planet. What could be more beautiful than that?

“*I hope the Planet Positive Beauty Guide helps you to navigate the claims and certifications used across the British beauty industry. From recycling & refilling to making more informed choices when buying product & choosing services, I urge you all to have the ‘courage to change.’*”

Millie Kendall MBE

CEO AT BRITISH
BEAUTY COUNCIL



Contributors

The Planet Positive Beauty Guide has been written in collaboration with representatives from the Sustainable Beauty Coalition

[#PlanetPositiveBeautyGuide](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Website](#)



With thanks to

The British Beauty Council and the Sustainable Beauty Coalition

@britishbeautycouncil
@sustainablebeautycoalition

Red Consultancy

@redprnews

Matrix

@this_is_matrix

Seen Group

@seen_group

Jo Fairley

@jofairley

Andrea Horth

@anlyho

Provenance

@provenancehq

Weleda

@weledauk

Cult Beauty

@cultbeauty



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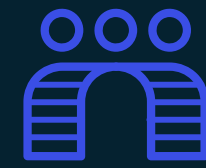
How to make greener beauty choices



Ingredients



Packaging



People



Sustainable
Sourcing