

How To Be an Environmentally and Socially Conscious Consumer

A environmentally or socially conscious consumer will think whether consumption is necessary, then once they decide to buy, they look at who is providing the product and how the product impacts each environment touched in its creation and delivery. Conscious consumerism is when buying practices are driven by a commitment to making purchasing decisions that have positive social, economic, and environmental impact. In other words, it's a movement whereby consumers vote with their dollar by buying ethical products, avoiding unethical companies, and sometimes not purchasing at all.

10 Ways You Can Be a Conscious Consumer

There are many ways that you can be a conscious consumer and do your part in making the world a better place:

1. Incorporate minimalism into your life as much as possible. Distinguish between necessary and unnecessary buys. When searching for everyday products, consider how they are made and their entire lifecycle impact—our partner, A Good Company, is leading the way on this front.
2. Choose to buy from companies that put planet and people first. Our friends at A Good Company aren't alone in their efforts to redefine business as a force for good.
3. Buy fair trade coffee, fashion, handicrafts, fruit and more.
4. Buy earth friendly products that are made with natural ingredients and materials, e.g. a composting phone case. And these don't just have to be for you! Check out our list of the perfect environmentally friendly gifts.
5. Buy cruelty-free, plastic-free toiletries and cosmetics.
6. Limit air travel and get around by using rideshares, biking, taking the train and public transport and if possible, drive electric vehicles
7. Go zero-waste.
8. Eliminate the use of single-use plastics and use reusable cups, utensils, bags and containers instead.
9. Reuse items and buy second-hand whenever you can: peruse flea markets, borrow from friends and family, shop on online marketplaces and try to fix broken goods rather than buying new.
10. Always recycle paper and plastic, dispose of old clothes responsibly, and consider composting at home.

Bonus: don't stop at where and what you buy, consider where your dollars call home and make the switch to an eco-conscious, socially responsible bank.

How Can You Determine Which Companies are Ethical?

Companies understand that being ethical is in vogue so their marketing messaging touts sustainability and ethical practices. While that may be a sign of the prevailing conscious consumer (wool!), it's always good to look a little deeper to make sure companies are actually taking action consistent with what they're promoting.

It can be hard to know what to look for when determining whether a company is ethical or not. But once you can identify the characteristics of truly socially responsible companies, you'll be able to parse through what is pandering and what sustainability goes to the core of a company's operations.

Social entrepreneurs are everywhere, and the number is only growing! We suggest looking into which companies are certified B Corporations. These companies undergo a rigorous vetting process through the B Impact Assessment that scores impact across business operations.

Conscious Consumerism is Only One of our Tools, but Still One to Use

It would be naive to say that buying things is going to save the planet; it won't. However, it would be equally naive to resign ourselves to inaction. Unless you live off the grid, grow your own food, build your own shelter, etc.—more power to self-sustaining individuals!—buying things is an inevitable fact of your existence.

If we have to be consumers, why not vote with our dollars like we mean it and buy from companies who genuinely care about making the world a better place? Why not support environmentally friendly companies that prioritize our planet's health? Why not boycott companies who engage in labor unethical practices?

When you look at it as if you're fighting an insurmountable beast, it seems like a futile, unwinnable undertaking, but the fact is, every single bit counts. Taking on that perspective is critical in being a conscious individual, not just a conscious consumer.

For inspiration from nation-wide movements, you can look at countries like The Gambia, Morocco, Costa Rica and India, which are making great strides in reaching goals against fighting climate change.

So much can be done: We can take institutional actions such as supporting our governments in investing in renewable energy; group action volunteering time and money to organizations fighting for the rights of marginalized groups; community action encouraging our friends, family, and colleagues to go green; and, as you know, individual action, including using our dollar as conscious consumers.

Is it easy? Not by a long shot. Is it worth it? Of Course!