



finch

Rating System Cheat Sheet

Finch provides the most reliable, easy-to-digest ratings on all your favorite consumer goods.

The data experts at Finch have scored different products' form, function and impact to help people make informed choices on a daily basis.

OUR RATING SCALE

We're on an ever-evolving path, and "good" vs. "bad" is too binary (and binary was so 2002). We're also human, and sometimes we just want a new duvet cover, so it's unrealistic for us to just stop being human and stop using stuff. That's why we rate products on a sliding scale and grade on a curve — we want to equip you to make your own choices and focus on what matters, whether you want to use your purchasing power for "good" or just need to clean the sink.

Because we always compare apples to apples, products are graded on a curve against like products in their category. Think of our scale like a traffic light...but the kind of light where green doesn't mean go as fast as you can and red means proceed with great caution. For example, yellow-rated paper towels have a different impact than yellow-rated diapers because diapers are inherently more impactful on the environment than paper towels.

GREEN

6.5 – 10

If you've got to buy something, choosing a product in the "green" is the way to go. Green means we've verified that the company supports people and the planet, that the product is among the least harmful in its category, and that it is enjoyable to use.

YELLOW

3.5 – 6.4

Products in this range aren't the best, but they aren't the worst. If one of your favorite products is in the yellow range, go for it, but know that there are better options out there.

RED

0.0 – 3.4

We'll never tell you not to buy something you really want, but if something falls in this rating range, it's an indication that it is probably pretty bad for the planet and that people don't like using it in real life.





FRIENDLY REMINDER:

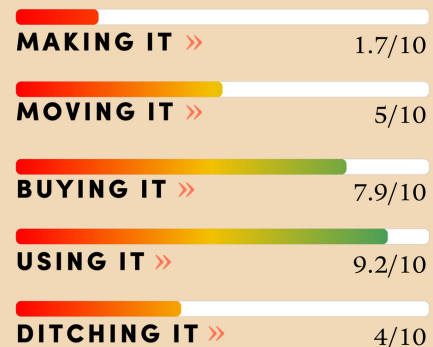
At the end of the day, consumerism in any form won't solve the problem. We may not be able to single-handedly dismantle society's reliance on fossil fuels or eradicate child labor globally by swapping toilet paper brands, but we all have a role to play and our individual actions can lead to collective rewards.

When it comes to sustainability, practice may never make perfect, but it'll sure help us make progress.

How We Rate

Once we've gathered all the data for a given product, we assign numerical values to each of its attributes, weigh them by their relative importance, and aggregate them together.

Each attribute falls within one of the five key product phases (Making It, Moving It, Buying It, Using It, Ditching It). These product phases are not all weighted equally — the magic of our proprietary algorithm lies in our deeper understanding of which phases and attributes have the biggest influence on the performance and environmental impact of each product, category by category.



MAKING IT:

Refers to the sourcing and production of the product. We take into account the environmental impact of the materials used, working conditions at manufacturing sites, and a company's internal practices.

Company Certifications:

- We like companies who don't just talk the talk, but also walk the walk. A company that qualifies for social and environmental sustainability certifications is clearly going the extra mile to make the planet a bit better.

Product Certifications:

- Any product can be good, but not every product can be great. Certifying a product as safer, more sustainable, and made in responsible and conscious ways is the most reliable way to distinguish good products from great ones.

Manufacturing Location:

- Where your stuff is made impacts more than the “Made In...” tag on your favorite t-shirt. Different countries rely on different energy mixes, so while one is burning coal, another might be using solar panels. We also scrutinize labor practices in each country to make sure we’re helping you choose products that support people’s livelihoods.

Recycled and Organic Materials:

- Using recycled materials doesn’t just save the fish from the growing Great Pacific Garbage Patch...it also helps reduce the carbon footprint of your stuff. Same with organics; while they may cost more, they are better for the environment in measurable ways.

Manufacturing Energy:

- Your favorite thingamajig might not need a lot of energy to operate, but the factory in which it was built probably does. A majority of manufacturing energy for most companies will be drawn from their country’s energy grid. While the manufacturers do not choose the way their energy is produced, they do choose the factory location. A product made by a coal-powered electric grid is worse for the planet than a product made by a renewable grid.

Solar/Wind/Renewables Investment:

- Companies that have taken concrete steps toward investing in cleaner energy sources make products with a lower relative carbon footprint by default, and we give them points for that.

Animal Testing:

- Animal testing is really an unnecessary component of production if the materials being used are fully above board and properly certified by the EPA and FDA. Companies should avoid animal testing at all costs, unless required for regulatory approval (such as for medicine).

Packaging Problems*:

- Single-use plastic doesn’t need to exist, so we make sure to reward companies that are minimizing plastic packaging...or, even better, getting rid of it all together.

Manufacturing Carbon Footprint*:

- Everything has a carbon footprint, even that old teddy bear that you refuse to throw out. This goes that extra step past energy efficiency to calculate the GHGs emitted when your favorite stuff is manufactured.

Manufacturing Water Use*:

- Experts say that we have less than 20 years until the entire world could be suffering from severe fresh water shortages. Let’s buy stuff that doesn’t totally drain the most important liquid on the planet.

Concerning Chemicals*:

- Concerning Chemicals*: We have a secret to tell you, so lean in close. There is no such thing as “chemical-free”...that’s a bogus term. Everything in the universe is made of chemicals, so instead of trying to unsuccessfully avoid all chemicals in the world, we’ll let you know what the scientists think about the chemicals used to make stuff.

**We do a lot of testing to make sure our algorithm is weighting attributes in the right way. We’re still in the process of verifying starred items and it may not be 100% incorporated into all product insights at the time you’re reading this.*



MOVING IT:

Includes information about transportation methods used by a company to move stuff around, as well as how far products have to be shipped to get to your door. By studying these factors, we're able to determine the relative environmental impact of the product's journey from manufacturer to customer. Bonus points for brands that actually know where their raw materials are sourced.

Manufacturer-to-Consumer Distance*:

- The further a product has to travel to get to you, the more gas is burned in its transportation, and the more emissions enter the atmosphere.

Delivery Methods*:

- Did you know that moving a product by plane produces 100-300x more CO₂e than moving it in a giant ocean freight? Delivery methods matter, and we give credit to companies transporting their goods in less impactful ways.



BUYING IT:

Includes how much something actually costs and how accessible it is to people of all backgrounds. Society has developed a weird way of pricing products that a) doesn't account for the actual costs associated with making it and b) skews our perception of what things are worth. That said, there's a big difference between supporting companies that pay a living wage and paying more than \$600 for a tablecloth.

Product Price:

- For many, living sustainably is a necessity, not a nice-to-have. We're tired of the trendy, inaccessible lifestyle bit and aim to decouple sustainability and status, which is why we take into account the suggested retail price of every product that we rate (we look at how much the company actually wants people to pay before any sales and promotions).

Accessibility*:

- How easy is it to get the product you're interested in buying? Is it only sold in luxury boutiques in urban centers? Do you have to sign up for a new account, maybe even commit to a subscription? We like products that don't require extra time and money to access.



USING IT:

Considers direct and indirect inputs, the lifespan of products, and, of course, real reviews about how well a product works in real life.

Amazon Reviews:

- We currently scrape aggregated, anonymized reviews from third-party sources, like Amazon, to hone in on functionality, quality, and practicality.



Finch Finders' Reviews*:

- It's great to get a product that is better for the planet, but what's the point if it doesn't work well? To evaluate goods, we've enlisted our Charm of Finders to provide candid feedback about how well products work, how long they last and how enjoyable they are to use. Sign up to join the Charm and [review products in real life here](#).

Reusability and Lifespan*:

- The best way to mitigate the negative impact that stuff has on the environment is to choose products that are designed to last a long time, instead of spending money on one-and-dones.*

Inputs*:

- Direct and indirect inputs are things like the amount of water is used to wash your bed sheets or the amount of energy required to charge your phone. Never thought about that? Well, we have, and we'll help you not only choose products that proactively minimize those inputs, but also give you tips and tricks to decrease them.

DITCHING IT:

Considers what happens at the end of a product's "life" (have you ever thought about your stuff "dying"?!) and takes into account whether products and their packaging is recyclable, biodegradable, circular, etc. At our current rate, the U.S. may run out of landfill space by the year 2035. That's why we believe that what happens to a product when you're done is just as important as what goes on when it's being made.

Recyclability:

- Let's face it - America's recycling system is totally broken. Only about [66%](#) of paper and cardboard, [35%](#) of aluminum, and [9%](#) of plastics that are produced in America end up being recycled annually. While we've got a long way to go in fixing this system, it is important that we recognize companies choosing to use recyclable materials over those that will definitely be landfilled.

Biodegradability:

- Biodegradable alternatives have complicated implications that hinge on their disposal. A biodegradable diaper is great if it is properly composted, as it can divert waste from landfills and keep our marine life safe from microplastics. However, when biodegradable materials are sent to the landfill where they break down without oxygen, they release a damaging cocktail of methane and carbon dioxide and their GHG impacts skyrocket. Despite disposal complications, we value biodegradable materials over synthetic ones, as their production generally relies on fewer chemicals and they offer consumers the opportunity to reduce landfill waste.

Take Back Programs*:

- Some companies are experimenting with closed-loop production processes, and we're here for it. Most commonly, they offer take-back programs in which they ask customers to send back their goods after use. Through partnerships with companies like [The Renewal Workshop](#) or [TerraCycle](#), these companies are able to contribute to a circular economy by refurbishing, upcycling, or reusing components of the good goods.

Our Sources

Sustainability and efficacy is our sweet spot. We aggregate scientific sources and empower users to help test and score for practicality and quality. We only use vetted data to inform product insights in all categories.

Our machine-learning enabled algorithm pulls data from company reporting, company and product certifications, LCA databases, and industry indices. We cross-check the information pulled from these sources against peer-reviewed scientific research to effectively quantify the impact of each attribute.



COMPANY & PRODUCT CERTIFICATIONS

- [B Corporation](#)
- [Climate Neutral](#)
- [1% for the Planet](#)
- [Amazon Climate Pledge](#)
- [Oeko-Tex](#)
- [Forest Stewardship Council](#)
- [Global Organic Textile Standard](#)
- [Global Organic Latex Standard](#)
- [Fair Trade](#)
- [CertiPUR-US®](#)
- [UL Greenguard Certification Program](#)
- [Sustainable Forestry Initiative](#)
- [EPA Safer Choice](#)
- [EWG's Skin Deep](#)
- [USDA BioPreferred](#)
- [Leaping Bunny](#)
- [PETA Cruelty-Free](#)
- [Global Traceable Down Standard](#)
- [Responsible Down Standard](#)
- [RE100](#)
- [Green-e](#)
- [We Are Still In](#)
- [We Mean Business](#)

MATERIALS

- [Earth 911](#)
- [Biodegradable Products Institute](#)
- [GaBi 1](#)
- [Ecoinvent 2](#)
- [CarbonScope](#)
- [Higg Index](#)

LOCATIONS

- [ITUC Global Rights Index](#)
- [Environmental Performance Index](#)
- [Energy mix of countries](#)
- [The International Energy Association](#)

PEER-REVIEWED RESOURCES

- [Life Cycle Assessment in Principle and Practice](#)
- [Pursuing Sustainability](#)

1. GaBi is a commonly used Life Cycle Inventory database, as well as a piece of Life Cycle Analysis software. The database contains comprehensive information on the connections between each material and the processes required to make and use that material. The LCA software can be used to calculate the impact of each material in terms of carbon footprint, water use, ecological hazard, embodied energy, etc. As more is known about the entire product, an LCA can also be conducted to understand the impacts from cradle-to-grave.
2. Similar to GaBi, Ecoinvent is a comprehensive database that can be used to calculate environmental impacts of materials or products by using complementary Life Cycle Assessment software. Ecoinvent currently has a larger database than GaBi.