



The Green Book Alliance (GBA) Publisher-Printer Sustainability Checklist

Version 0.9

This checklist has been developed as the output of a project conducted by the GBA. The checklist was created to help publishers and printers ask and answer questions about sustainability. The focus is on understanding what is being asked and sharing what manufacturing partners are doing concerning sustainability. These global questions can be used by everyone, no matter what point has been reached in an organisation's sustainability journey.

In preparing this checklist, we have assumed that both publishers and their manufacturing partners are working to understand a range of sustainability topics. A publisher asking these questions has started its sustainability journey. Manufacturers have addressed elements of sustainability for a generation or more, and elements of this checklist will be familiar to them. To the extent that either party is new to some components of sustainability, we have worked to define terms and explain the components of effective answers.

Note: This is a living document. The newest version can always be found on the Green Book Alliance website at: <https://www.greenbookalliance.org/checklist>

Paper

Questions and examples of complete or effective answers

01. What is the carbon footprint of the paper and cover stocks you use?
 - a. Most publishers report the largest share of a carbon footprint comes from paper production. To accurately estimate the carbon footprint of a published title, publishers need to know the carbon intensity of the papers they are considering for that book. This information can be obtained from the mill that produced the paper. It will vary from mill to mill based on multiple factors and may also vary by paper type and grade. Therefore, you need to separate out Scopes 1, 2 and 3 for the information the mill is supplying, as the figures for Scope 3 can vary depending on what the mill has included in that category.
02. Are these papers FSC ([Forest Stewardship Council](#)), PEFC ([The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification](#)), SFI ([Sustainable Forestry Initiative](#)) or EPAT ([Environmental Paper Assessment Tool](#)) graded or any other recognised accreditation?
 - a. The manufacturer should provide a list of papers that they stock or can reasonably source, accompanied by a verified accreditation, where available.
03. What are your paper sourcing strategies?
 - a. The manufacturer should be able to describe their ability to obtain adequate volumes of recycled and accredited stock, identifying mills where they have ongoing relationships, current or expected lead times for stock and special orders, and any mill-determined requirements, such as minimum order quantity or minimum basis weight.
04. What types of recycled paper (e.g., 100% post-consumer waste, or PCW) do you stock or are you able to source?

- a. The manufacturer should provide a list of papers that they stock or can reasonably source for body stock, end sheets, board, cover stock, and other uses. Ideally, each paper should be accompanied by a verified assessment of its recycled content. Organizations like Carnstone and the [Book Chain Project](#) in the UK, as well as the Canopy [EcoPaper Database](#), are able to provide verified data, some on a subscription or fee basis.
05. Do the mills you are sourcing from provide this information, and have you asked for it?
- a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. If a manufacturer finds that a mill fails to compile or provide an estimate of its carbon footprint by paper type or grade, efforts must be made to engage the mill in a conversation around the need for this information. Publisher engagement with the mill may be useful in this situation.
06. Do the mills you are sourcing from provide certificates to go with the paper stock?
- a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. If a chain of custody certificate is available, sharing it with the publisher is helpful.
07. Do you order any/regular independent fibre testing?
- a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. If “Yes” then please provide information around what you do.

Printing

Questions and examples of complete or effective answers

01. Do you recommend trim sizes to reduce waste?
- a. Manufacturers typically can identify trim sizes that are more economical on its presses than other ones. These preferred sizes more efficiently convert to printed sheets with a minimum of waste. The options can generate a conversation between the publisher and printer about how the publisher might change their trim sizes to be more economical. Also there should be a conversation around the number of blank pages at the back of a book. Are the publishers trying to make their books fit even workings or not? Note that planning an answer to blank pages is more complicated with production plans that might use inkjet presses, which print in 6’s and other denominations. It is understood that this can be complicated if a book is being printed across a number of printing technologies such as litho/offset or digitally. This is an area where conversations could take place between publisher and printer.
02. Do you recommend any more sustainable papers to be used on your presses?
- a. The situation is evolving, but manufacturers have reported that recycled papers do not pass through Inkjet presses easily. Manufacturers should identify limitations and describe options for publishers that want to use only recycled paper. Consistent with the answers provided in the paper section, manufacturers can identify papers that can be reliably sourced and work most efficiently with their presses.
03. Do you produce print-on-demand (POD) products as part of your sustainability program, i.e., one order, one copy or short run?
- a. Print-on-demand options can reduce the need for transportation, lowering a book’s carbon footprint. Manufacturers should provide a list of the printing options that can be used to reduce a publisher’s carbon footprint.
04. What types of inks/glues are you using?
- a. The carbon footprint for some supplied materials has not been reliably established, but the types of ink and glue used in manufacturing books can affect their recyclability. Manufacturers should specify the range of material options, including inks and glues seen to have more sustainable characteristics. Can you provide the make-up of the inks and glues you use, such as mineral or vegetable inks? Trade-offs

in book quality can also be identified in this answer. You need to understand all the major chemical components used in printing, such as the fountain solution, blanket washes, hot melt and PUR adhesives, all types of laminate, and the inks being used.

05. Are you looking at environmentally friendlier options for any aspect of your manufacturing processes?
 - a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. If “Yes”, manufacturers should add information on their practices or plans.

Packaging

New UK [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) legislation requires businesses to measure and report on packaging specifically, plus, new legislation in France, Sweden and Spain is also seeing increased requests for data on packaging materials and volumes.

Questions and examples of complete or effective answers

01. Can you explain what types of corrugated cartons you are using?
 - a. Are they made from recycled material, and how much PCW filler is used in their making?
02. Can you explain what materials you use as fillers between books and cartons to protect them?
 - a. Please explain what you are using and provide as much detail as you can about the material.
03. Can you explain what plastics you are using as part of the packaging of the books you produce?
 - a. Please explain the materials that you are using and how recyclable they are.

Plastic

Questions and examples of complete or effective answers

01. Are you looking at alternatives to plastic shrink-wrap, pallet shrink-wrap, and plastic packaging to protect books during shipping?
 - a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. If “Yes”, manufacturers should add information on their practices or plans.
02. Are you looking at alternatives to plastic lamination?
 - a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. If “Yes”, manufacturers should add information on their practices or plans.
03. What do you use for lamination? (e.g. UV, supplier, chemical composition)? How do you determine its impact on a book’s carbon footprint and sustainability?
 - a. Manufacturers should identify the specific approaches taken to laminate books. To the extent possible, manufacturers should identify the source of the materials and their characteristics. As noted in the section on Printing above, the environmental impact of some of these sourced materials may not have been fully studied at this point.
04. Do you measure the amount of plastic you use in your supply chain? That is plastic in the building, what plastic you use in packaging processes, and what leaves the building with product, waste and recycled material.
 - a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. If “Yes”, manufacturers should provide a detailed answer about their measurements.
05. Can you describe how you dispose of your plastic waste?
 - a. Please explain if it goes to co-gen, landfill or any other options that you use.

Recycling

Recycling is the process of converting waste materials into new materials and objects. The recovery of energy from waste materials is often included in this concept. The recyclability of a material depends on its ability to reacquire the properties it had in its original state. It is an alternative to "conventional" waste disposal that can save material and help lower greenhouse gas emissions. It can also prevent the waste of potentially useful materials and reduce the consumption of fresh raw materials, reducing energy use, air pollution (from incineration) and water pollution (from landfilling). It is better to recycle books to make packaging than to try and recycle the materials to make books again.

Recycling is a key component of modern waste reduction and is the third component of the "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle" waste hierarchy. It promotes environmental sustainability by removing raw material input and redirecting waste output in the economic system. There are some ISO standards related to recycling, such as ISO 15270:2008 for plastics waste and ISO 14001:2015 for environmental management control of recycling practice.

The following table, drawn from a report created by Book Industry Communication, provides the relative composition of recycled materials, shown here as a percentage of the total amount of recycled waste, i.e., everything is being recycled, and nothing is going to landfill. Many of these materials may be up or down-cycled for other, more efficient uses.

Recycled materials	Average %
Bound books	3 %
Cardboard	6 %
Mixed	4 %
Mixed paper	12 %
Plastic	1 %
Printed paper	62 %
Unprinted paper	7 %
Wood	1 %
Aluminium plates	7 %

Questions and examples of complete or effective answers

01. Describe your recycling practices?
 - a. All manufacturers have plans in place for regular recycling of paper, other materials, and components not included in a final book. These practices should be described, accompanied by a brief explanation of each area. Some things, like chemicals, are governed by law as to how they are to be stored and subsequently disposed of. To the extent that a manufacturer has committed to supporting a circular economy, the answer should capture policies and results in the most recent reporting periods.
02. What materials are you recycling, and how do you measure this - by weight, volume or value? How does this break down in percentages, such as in the table above?
 - a. Manufacturers should provide a list/table of materials that they are recycling, accompanied by what percentage of your recycling these materials make up.
03. What share of materials are sent to landfill, and how do you measure this - by weight, volume or value?
 - a. Manufacturers should identify the share of waste materials sent to landfills rather than recycled. To accompany this answer, recent trends and any plans to reduce the share of waste sent to landfill would be useful.
04. What key performance indicators (KPIs) are you using to measure recyclability? Improvement?

- a. Manufacturers should provide the measurements and methodology they use to manage and reduce waste.
05. Are you reporting this internally and/or externally?
- a. Both internal (staff) and external (clients, community, governing bodies, etc.) audiences are important to understanding and validating recycling policies. Manufacturers should identify who is regularly informed and how they convey that information.

Greenhouse Gases

Questions and examples of complete or effective answers

01. Have you started measuring your carbon footprint and looking at your Greenhouse Gas(GHG) emissions?
- a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. Details can be provided in answers to the questions that follow.
02. If yes, what part of your Scopes 1, 2 and 3 emissions are you measuring?
- a. Scopes 1, 2, and 3 refer to the sources of emissions (for more information, see related materials on the GBA website). Manufacturers monitoring emissions according to the source should identify what is measured and what entities are included in each scope. Across printers, answers can vary depending on the methodology used.
03. If yes, are you using the [Greenhouse Gas Protocol](#), [Science Based Targets Initiative](#) or [Carbon Disclosure Project](#) to measure your emissions? If not, what protocol are you using?
- a. With a defined structure, the Greenhouse Gas Protocol is seen as a standard that organisations can use to establish carbon emissions in a standard way. Other approaches can also be used; the approach employed should be identified. Manufacturers can use the protocol(s) to explain how carbon calculations have been made.
04. Can you provide this information so we can calculate our Scope 3 emissions?
- a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. Publishers will look for details to inform their own reporting on Scope 3 emissions.
05. What steps are you taking to reduce/mitigate your carbon/GHG footprint?
- a. The Greenhouse Gas Protocol helps publishers and manufacturers obtain a baseline understanding of current carbon emissions tied to their work. Once a baseline is established, most companies set targets for improvement. In answering this question, manufacturers can reference their plans to reduce emissions, inform publishers, and help both parties plan future reductions.
06. Are you offsetting your carbon/GHG emissions or using RECs (Renewable Energy Certificates)? If so, how?
- a. Carbon offsets come in many forms. They are traded or purchased to help companies reduce their carbon footprint, often with a “net zero” target or less. Generally, the best practice is to reduce your carbon footprint as much as possible until only a small percentage remains, and then you can use carbon offsets to reduce the rest to zero. Larger offsets are possible but are unusual. Manufacturers can report offsets as a share of total emissions or a carbon amount. RECs (Renewable Energy Certificates) are a market-based instrument certifying that the bearer owns one megawatt-hour (MWh) of electricity generated from a renewable energy resource. Once the power provider has fed the energy into the grid, the REC received can be sold on the open market as an energy commodity.
07. Does your business monitor and track energy consumption and conduct on-site energy audits?

- a. Depending on the type of business, energy consumption can be a significant component of carbon emissions. The carbon impact can vary by source, as different energy providers have different carbon intensities. Tracking carbon footprints by the source is a useful way to understand current impact and improvement opportunities. Manufacturers should report all sources of energy and their calculated carbon impact.
08. Does your business have a system to reduce the environmental impact of energy use and greenhouse gases?
- a. As noted in answer to question 5 in this section, baseline calculations provide a basis for improvement (reductions in carbon footprint). Manufacturers can provide plans to improve (lower) carbon emissions derived from energy consumption.
09. Does your business have goals and targets to reduce GHG emissions? If yes, what are the targets?
- a. Related to questions 5 and 8 in this section, manufacturers can provide plans to reduce carbon emissions in all areas, including energy (covered in question 8).
10. What are the total annual GHG emissions in the most recent year measured?
- a. Total emissions are typically reported as Scopes 1, 2, or 3, with the value entered in total metric tons CO₂e. The carbon impact reported here is not wholly attributable to operations for a single publisher.
11. Does the business report GHG emissions and climate change strategy to the [Carbon Disclosure Project \(CDP\)](#) or publicly disclose an equivalent amount and type of information annually?
- a. Manufacturers may align their sustainability efforts with external entities that help with reporting frameworks. Companies using their services may value the consistency and validation of these external frameworks.

ESG - Environmental, Social and Governance

Questions and examples of complete or effective answers

01. Does your company report on its ESG progress?
- a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. If “Yes”, a reference to the most recent report is a good response. Manufacturers looking to do business with companies based in the EU might need to pay particular attention to this as a requirement.

Shipping/Transportation

The term “shipping” includes all types of shipping (truck, van, rail, air and ship).

Questions and examples of complete or effective answers

01. Is inbound and outbound shipping included in your GHG calculations?
- a. Manufacturers may elect to report the carbon impact of shipping as part of their aggregate calculations of GHG emissions, or it can be excluded. Either approach can be justified. In answering this question, manufacturers should make clear what is included and excluded with respect to GHG calculations.
02. Concerning the inbound shipping of paper from the mill, do you confirm the number of miles from the mill to the printer as well as the method of transportation, as the Carbon Factor for truck, rail and ocean shipments is different?
- a. This is a “Yes” or “No” answer. If Yes, then you need to explain your workings and what you include in your scope reporting.
03. What are you doing to reduce the carbon footprint of your inbound and outbound shipping or both?

- a. Because inbound and outbound shipping is included in this question, manufacturers may answer in part or in full, depending on where efforts have been made to reduce carbon footprint. Manufacturers should identify initiatives, expected targets for reductions, and opportunities for publishers to work with them to reduce emissions associated with outbound shipments.
04. Does your business have in place targets and programs to reduce overall sustainability impacts by managing transportation logistics (e.g., prioritizing low-impact transportation modes)?
- a. Consistent with questions 5 and 8 under “Greenhouse Gases”, manufacturers can identify opportunities for publishers to collaborate on the overall impact of shipping processes on GHG emissions.

Standards

Questions and examples of complete or effective answers

01. Are you working towards any sustainability accreditations or standards?
- a. A variety of accreditations and standards exist (examples include [Cradle to Cradle](#), [B Corp](#), and [EUEcolabel](#)). Manufacturers should identify any accreditations or standards they hold or are working to obtain. Additional disclosure could include an explanation of the rationale for pursuing those accreditations.
02. What ISO standards have you met or currently hold?
- a. Typical ISO standards held by manufacturers include ISO 14001, ISO 50000, and ISO 9001. Manufacturers should identify any standards they currently hold. Additional disclosure could include an explanation of the rationale for pursuing those standards.
03. Do you hold other sustainability accreditations or standards?
- a. Other standards do exist. Manufacturers that have pursued other sustainability certifications can identify those accreditations. Additional disclosure could include an explanation of the rationale for pursuing those standards, which would be particularly helpful for less well-known standards.