

10th Grade



greenwashing

Adapted Reading Passage

Greenwashing is a deceptive marketing tactic used by companies to make their products or practices seem environmentally friendly when they're actually not [1]. It's like when a company spends more money on advertising their "green" image than on actually being sustainable [1]. They might even change the name or label of a product to make it seem natural, even if it contains harmful chemicals [1]. This kind of greenwashing is meant to hide the company's unsustainable practices and policies [1]. It's a way for companies to improve their public image and make consumers think they're doing good for the environment, even if they're not [1].

Greenwashing can be hard to spot, but there are some signs to look out for [2]. One sign is when a company makes vague or unclear claims about being "eco-friendly" or "green" without providing specific information [2]. Another sign is when a company uses suggestive images to give the impression of being environmentally friendly without providing any real data [2]. Companies might also focus on one small green attribute without mentioning the rest of their practices [2]. And sometimes, a company might make a claim that seems correct, but they don't provide any evidence to back it up [2]. These are all red flags that could indicate greenwashing.

As a consumer, it's important to do your research and not fall for greenwashing [3]. You can start by reading product reviews and looking for certifications that indicate a product is truly sustainable [3]. For example, the Cradle2Cradle certification is trusted by many consumers [3]. It's also a good idea to look for specific evidence and information about a company's sustainability practices [3]. By being a conscious consumer and making informed choices, you can help combat greenwashing and support truly sustainable businesses [3].

In conclusion, greenwashing is a deceptive marketing tactic used by companies to make themselves seem environmentally friendly when they're not [1]. It's important for consumers to be aware of greenwashing and to do their research to make sure they're supporting truly sustainable businesses [2][3]. By being informed and making conscious choices, we can help drive companies towards greener practices and protect the environment [2][3].

Sources:

- [1] "Greenwashing - Wikipedia"
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenwashing>
- [2] "What Is Greenwashing? - NRDC" Feb 9, 2023
<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/what-greenwashing>
- [3] "How to identify greenwashing and make sustainable buying decisions" Sep 27, 2023
<https://www.colorado.edu/ecenter/2023/09/27/how-identify-greenwashing-and-make-sustainable-buying-decisions>
- [4] "Greenwashing - ClientEarth"
<https://www.clientearth.org/what-we-do/priorities/greenwashing/>
- [5] "A spotter's guide to greenwashing - and what to do about it | World ..." May 20, 2021
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/05/how-spot-greenwashing/>
- [6] "WWF Guide to Greenwashing"
<https://www.wwf.org.uk/learn/guide-to-greenwashing>

Summary

- Greenwashing is a deceptive marketing tactic used by companies to make their products or practices seem environmentally friendly when they're actually not.
- Companies use vague claims, suggestive images, and focus on one small green attribute to deceive consumers.
- Consumers should do research, read product reviews, look for certifications, and seek specific evidence to avoid falling for greenwashing.

Key Vocabulary Words

greenwashing (noun)

Definition: a deceptive marketing tactic used by companies to make their products or practices seem environmentally friendly when they're actually not.

Example: The company's greenwashing tactics fooled many consumers into thinking their products were sustainable.

sustainable (adjective)

Definition: able to be maintained at a certain level or rate without depleting natural resources or causing harm to the environment.

Example: The company implemented sustainable practices to reduce their carbon footprint.

certifications (noun)

Definition: official documents or qualifications that confirm that a product or practice meets specific standards of sustainability or quality.

Example: The product had multiple certifications, including organic and fair trade.

conscious (adjective)

Definition: aware of and responding to one's surroundings; deliberate and intentional.

Example: She made a conscious effort to reduce her plastic waste by using reusable bags.

attribute (noun)

Definition: a quality or characteristic that is considered to be a part of something or someone.

Example: One of the key attributes of the product is its durability.

Multiple Choice Questions

1. What is greenwashing?

- A) A marketing tactic used by companies to promote their sustainable practices.
- B) A deceptive marketing tactic used by companies to make their products seem environmentally friendly when they're not.
- C) A certification trusted by consumers to indicate a product's sustainability.
- D) A term used to describe companies that are truly sustainable.

Answer: B) A deceptive marketing tactic used by companies to make their products seem environmentally friendly when they're not.

2. How can consumers identify greenwashing?

- A) By looking for vague claims about being eco-friendly without providing specific information.
- B) By focusing on one small green attribute without mentioning the rest of the company's practices.
- C) By providing evidence to back up their claims of being environmentally friendly.
- D) By changing the name or label of a product to make it seem natural.

Answer: A) By looking for vague claims about being eco-friendly without providing specific information.

3. What can consumers do to combat greenwashing?

- A) Read product reviews and look for certifications indicating sustainability.
- B) Ignore any claims made by companies and continue purchasing as usual.
- C) Rely solely on suggestive images provided by companies to determine their environmental friendliness.
- D) Support companies that engage in greenwashing to improve their public image.

Answer: A) Read product reviews and look for certifications indicating sustainability.

Short Answer Questions

1. What is greenwashing?

Answer: Greenwashing is a deceptive marketing tactic used by companies to make their products or practices seem environmentally friendly when they're actually not.

2. What are some signs that could indicate greenwashing?

Answer: Some signs that could indicate greenwashing are vague or unclear claims about being 'eco-friendly' or 'green', the use of suggestive images without providing real data, focusing on one small green attribute without mentioning other practices, and making claims without providing evidence to back them up.

3. Why is it important for consumers to do their research and not fall for greenwashing?

Answer: It is important for consumers to do their research and not fall for greenwashing because it allows them to make informed choices and support truly sustainable businesses. By being conscious consumers, we can help combat greenwashing and protect the environment.

Open-ended Prompts

1. How does the concept of greenwashing relate to your own experiences or observations?
2. In what ways can you identify greenwashing in your daily life? Provide examples.
3. What actions can you take as a consumer to avoid falling for greenwashing and support truly sustainable businesses?