



PRINT IS RENEWABLE, RECYCLABLE AND SUSTAINABLE

TWO COMMON MYTHS ABOUT PRINT ON PAPER, BUSTED!

There's a lot of misinformation about print on paper. Amidst all of the noise that "paper is bad" or "print kills forests," few realize that all of these myths are just that – myths. In reality, print has surprisingly good environmental credentials. Let's take a look at two of these myths and see what the facts really are...

Myth: Print on paper is a wasteful product

Fact: Paper is one of the most recycled products in the world!

In the U.S., nearly three times more paper is recycled than is sent to landfills¹—adding up to a remarkable 66 percent recycling rate in 2011². In fact, total paper recovery in the U.S. exceeded 51 million tons in 2012³, saving over 168.3 cubic yards of landfill space.

What do we do with all of that recovered paper? Approximately 33 percent of the fibers used to make paper products come from recycled paper.⁴ So recycled paper is used to make everything from paper-based packaging to tissue products, office paper and newsprint. You might say that the average paper has five lives, as the wood fibers used in its production can be recycled and reused five times.⁵

Myth: Paper has a high carbon footprint

Fact: Paper's carbon footprint is lower than you may think⁶

Paper is made from a renewable resource that stores carbon, is manufactured using mostly renewable energy and is largely recycled after it is used. All of these characteristics help to keep its carbon footprint reasonably low.

Let's look at paper's carbon footprint over key points in its lifetime, from forest to consumer. Forest products can require little or no fossil fuels for production, and they actually store carbon during their useful life. Because the paper industry relies primarily on carbon neutral biomass-derived fuels, paper production produces very little greenhouse gas emissions. And aggressive recycling on the consumer level cuts things down even more.

Conclusion

The paper and printing industry have a positive environmental story to tell. Which means graphic designers can take advantage of print's many benefits, knowing that print on paper is a surprisingly eco-friendly choice.

¹PaperRecycles.org, Fun Facts, accessed November 19, 2013.

²U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Frequent Questions about paper recycling, <http://www.epa.gov/osw/conservation/materials/paper/faqs.htm>, accessed November 19, 2013.

³PaperRecycles.org, *ibid*

⁴U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *ibid*

⁵Two Sides, "Print and Paper Myths and Facts", www.twosides.us, accessed November 19, 2013.

⁶*ibid*