

Eco **Cyclopedia**



Useful keywords for your
Green Event Management

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Introduction

The green MICE industry heavily relies on keywords. Events are **climate neutral** and **energy efficient**, our food is **organic** and our **waste management** is **eco-friendly**.

That's great! But, what does it all mean?

Marketing departments love superlatives and funky buzzwords are a perfect way to promote an event. As long as something sounds healthy and sustainable, no one will question your motives.

Until you're accused of greenwashing, that is.

The Green Event Planner accumulated the most common green buzzwords to help you sell the steak, not just the zizzle. We want to make sure that your event delivers on all your promises – and so should you!



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Eco**cyclo**pedia

What does **sustainable** actually mean? Where's the difference between **biodegradable** and **compostable**? And what's **organic**?

To avoid greenwashing, it's important to use the correct keywords. Here are the most common ones for your next green event.



Biodegradable does not equal compostable

Not all biodegradable products are compostable. When in doubt, consult the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment. **Here's** a list of do's and don'ts to get you started.

APEX/ASTAM Standards

The APEX / ASTAM standards are a collection of industry standards that specify precisely what it means to plan a green event. They mostly operate in the United States, but if you follow their guidelines, your event is in accordance with APEX / ASTAM. Find out more [here](#).

Biodegradable

Simply put: biodegradable products dissolve in nature without leaving a trace. They are broken down naturally by bacteria and living creatures such as worms and maggots. Biodegradable is not the same as compostable. Biodegradable waste decomposes completely, but only compostable waste returns important nutrients to the earth when it rots.

Carbon Footprint

Your carbon footprint determines the negative effect your event has on the climate. With a carbon footprint calculator, you can find out how high your carbon dioxide emission is. Sounds complicated, is not. Just click [here](#) and get the green party started.

Carbon Neutral

Hosting a climate- or carbon neutral event is practically impossible! You would only be allowed to use renewable energy, your attendees would have to arrive by bike or on foot and your food would have to be processed under the strictest of conditions.

That said, you CAN call your event carbon neutral – if you compensate for your carbon emissions. That practice is called Carbon Offset. Either by saving the equal amount of your event Co₂ somewhere else, by doing good (i.e. planting trees) or by donating money to a designated climate organisation. MyClimate offers this service in Switzerland. Click [here](#) for more information.

Compost

Composting refers to a part of the nutrient cycle in which organic material is broken down naturally and completely, with the help of oxygen, bacteria and other living organisms. The intermediate product of compost is humus, a soil used to fertilise plants, fruit and vegetables.

Ecological

This term has had an adventurous journey! Technically speaking, ecology is the science that explores the relationship of living things to each other AND to the environment. Today, it more or less describes our attitude towards resources. An ecological product is thus manufactured without harming the environment unnecessarily. And that is a plus for ecosystems everywhere!

Energy Efficient

Energy efficiency comes into play when you use electronic equipment. It measures how efficiently they work and how much electricity they consume. The less electricity, the better.

Rule of thumb is: the newer the equipment, the less energy it needs, as old electronic appliances are usually much less efficient.

If you only use LED lights and state of the art electronic equipment at your event, you can call it energy-efficient.

Energy Star Label

If you're looking for energy efficient electronic equipment, check energystar.gov. They're pioneers in quality products that are good for the environment.

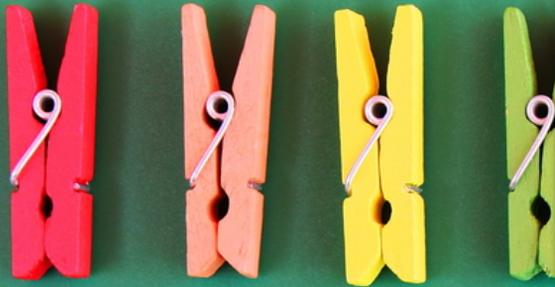


Environmentally Friendly

Here's where Fair Trade meets the ecosystem. An environmentally-friendly product shouldn't just be produced ecologically, it should also guarantee fair salaries to the producers and everyone else involved.

Greenwashing

Greenwashing refers to misleading and false statements by companies who claim to be more environmentally-friendly than they actually are. To avoid greenwashing, it's important to know the correct eco-terms.



Bluewashing

What greenwashing is for the environment, bluewashing is for social aspects. If a company claims to follow fair trade rules but don't do enough for human rights, poverty, labor and other related areas, they're guilty of bluewashing a product or service.

Fair Trade

Fair trade not only regulates product prices for producers abroad, it also enables the local population to continuously improve their living standards. This also includes waste disposal, clean drinking water and modern electricity systems. Which means that in the end, the environment massively profits from Fair Trade.

ISO 20121

The ISO (International Organization for Standardization) promotes green events, too! ISO 20121 offers guidance and best practice to help you manage your event and control its social, economic and environmental impact. The size of your event is not important, you can get certified, anyway. More info [here](#).

Organic

Organic products must be produced in a specific way. This includes the humane treatment of animals and the waiver of certain fertilizers, pesticides or other artificial chemicals. Organic is therefore a term mainly used in farming, aka comes into play when you offer food and drinks at your event.

Cotton can also be organic.

Recycling

Recycling is the process of converting waste materials into new materials or objects. It's not to be confused with biodegradable or compostable.

Materials that can be recycled include PET bottles, glass, aluminium, cardboard and paper. In Switzerland, it's fairly easy to collect and recycle these items. That's why recycling bins at events are an absolute must.

Renewable Energy

Wind-, water- and solar energy are available to us in practically unlimited supply. That's why they are called renewable energies. The more you can power your event with renewable energy, the better!

Reusable

Products that can be used several times are called reusables, for example: glass cups, steel cutlery or decoration you intend to use multiple times. But be aware: just because a product is reusable, it doesn't mean that it is ecological or environmentally friendly. It just means you intend to use it more than once.

Single Use Item

Items that can only be used once are called disposables. Or, single use items. These include plastic bags, plastic cutlery, paper napkins and everything in between. Single use items are harmful to the environment because they do not decompose naturally. If they find their way into nature, they just stay there. Or, even worse, end up in the ocean or in the stomach of an animal.

Sustainable

Sustainability means that something has a lasting effect over a longer period of time. The term found its way into the global eco-cyclopedia because products and services (i.e. events) that are less harmful for the environment can therefore be used more often or longer without feeling all the guilt.

Waste Management

Waste Management is the umbrella term for all things garbage. Managing your waste at your event does not make you more sustainable. It just means you're not throwing your trash on the floor.

The problem with adjectives

I've learned early on that buzzwords in the green event industry are somewhat vague. A sustainable event may have many facets, but adjectives should be chosen carefully.

While nothing stops you from calling your event «eco-friendly» or «organic», it just doesn't give your attendees any clues about what you're trying to do.

According to the dictionary, only three official terms are suitable to describe your event. All other terms should only be used for products and/or services.

«OUR EVENT IS...»

ZERO WASTE

Definition:

Generating little or no waste.

Everything that can be recycled (incl. compostable and biodegradable items) is NOT considered waste.

CLIMATE NEUTRAL

Definition:

1. Having or resulting in no net addition of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere
2. Counterbalancing the emission of carbon dioxide with carbon offsets

You can offset your carbon emissions with either an activity (i.e. planting trees or hosting a clean-up day) or donate money to a climate organisation. Check out myclimate.org for more information.

ENERGY EFFICIENT

Definition:

Using little to no no electricity

Energy efficiency doesn't stop with renewable energy. Anyone who uses modern electronic devices (Energy Star products, LED lights, etc.) and switches them off when not in use is, de facto, energy efficient.



Disclaimer

This eBook was written by Katrin Lüthy, founder and owner of The Green Event Planner. Whole passages and individual sections may not be copied without written consent.

The Green Event Planner

The Green Event Planner is a Swiss-based event consultancy. We focus on sustainable event solutions and help companies, vendors and private party enthusiasts to find simple and cost-efficient ways to green up their next business meeting, conference, party or event.

For more information, visit us on [**TheGreenEventPlanner.Com**](https://www.thegreeneventplanner.com)