

NEWS LESSON

Can You Trust That Green Label?

BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Which words on a product make it sound environmentally friendly?
2. Do you trust a simple green label or want more detail?
3. Would a smaller choice of well-explained products make shopping easier?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**greenwashing**	☐	A	gases that go into the air from cars, planes and factories
2	**label**	☐	B	making a product sound better for nature than it really is
3	**recycled**	☐	C	an official group that checks companies follow the rules
4	**regulator**	☐	D	a piece of paper on a product with information about it
5	**compensate**	☐	E	something that shows clearly that a thing is true
6	**emissions**	☐	F	made again from old things, like old plastic
7	**proof**	☐	G	to do something good to make up for something bad
8	**claim**	☐	H	a statement that says something is true

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A bottle looks good for the planet, but what does the label actually prove?

1 You are standing in a supermarket with two bottles of shampoo. One is plain. The other has green leaves on the label and says it is good for the planet. You reach for the greener-looking bottle, then notice that the label never explains what has actually improved. That small moment is exactly why environmental advertising can be so powerful. It can make us feel that we are choosing well before we have seen any proof.

2 Take a claim that sounds good but proves little. A bottle might use some recycled plastic but still create a great deal of waste. An airline might invite passengers to support environmental projects, although that payment does not stop the aircraft producing pollution. When a company makes a product seem better for the environment than it really is, this is called greenwashing. Green packaging is not wrongdoing in itself. The problem is a claim that hides the larger problem.

3 In July 2026, the UK's advertising regulator criticised advertisements from Eurowings and Qatar Airways. The companies had made claims about paying to compensate for flight emissions. The regulator decided that the adverts gave customers a misleading impression of how much environmental damage could be cancelled out. The airlines were told not to use those claims in the same way again.

4 The European Union has also brought in stronger rules against unclear environmental advertising. Since September 2026, businesses have faced restrictions on general green claims that do not have proper evidence. Labels cannot simply promise that a product is environmentally friendly without showing what that means. These rules aim to make it easier for customers to compare products fairly.

5 For shoppers, the best question is often a simple one: what exactly has improved? If packaging says it is recycled, find out how much recycled material it contains. If a company says it has reduced pollution, ask what figures support the claim. Not every business using green advertising is dishonest, and small improvements are worth making. But a leaf on a label is not proof that a product is good for the planet. Real progress needs more than a nice picture.

Sources: UK Advertising Standards Authority. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The airlines were told not to use those claims in the same way again. T F NG
2. The label on the shampoo bottle explains what has improved. T F NG
3. The airlines had to pay a fine. T F NG
4. Every company that uses green advertising is dishonest. T F NG
5. The writer says small improvements are worth making. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

evidence	impression	packaging	passengers	payment	pollution	restrictions

1. Many shops now sell food in paper _____ instead of plastic.
2. Cars and factories cause _____ in big cities.
3. Before you believe a claim, ask what _____ supports it.
4. The city has put _____ on cars in the centre, so fewer people drive there.
5. My first _____ of the new teacher was very good.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. You are _____ in a supermarket with two bottles of shampoo. (STAND)
2. When a company _____ a product seem better than it is, this is greenwashing. (MAKE)
3. In July 2026, the UK regulator _____ advertisements from two airlines. (CRITICISE)
4. The airlines _____ not to use those claims again. (TELL)
5. Since September 2026, businesses _____ restrictions on vague green claims. (FACE)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Linking words join ideas. Use but and although for a difference, because for a reason and so for a result.

although	because	but	however	otherwise	so	unless

1. The label used green leaves, _____ it did not say what had improved.
2. The airlines were criticised _____ their adverts gave a misleading impression.
3. The shop sells cheap soap. _____ , it is not made from recycled plastic.
4. The new rules are clear, _____ shoppers can compare products more easily.
5. _____ the bottle looked green, it was not a better choice.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What would a useful environmental label actually tell you?
2. Who should have to prove a green claim is true?
3. Would you trust a brand more if it admitted where it still caused harm?

9 Role-play: which bottle should we buy?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the shopper

You are in a shop with a friend. You want to buy the bottle with green leaves and the word eco on it. Explain why you like it and why you think it is a good choice.

Student B · the friend

You are not sure the label is true. Ask what the label really proves. Ask at least two questions, then decide together which bottle to buy.

Useful phrases

I'd like to buy this one, it looks greener.
What's the label actually telling us?
That doesn't prove anything.
I'm not sure we can trust it.
Let's check the figures before we decide.
Shall we buy the plain one instead?

Afterwards, tell the class which bottle you chose and why.

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 B · 2 D · 3 F · 4 C · 5 G · 6 A · 7 E · 8 H

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 T

5 Vocabulary

1 packaging · 2 pollution · 3 evidence · 4 restrictions · 5 impression

6 Verb forms

1 standing · 2 makes · 3 criticised · 4 were told · 5 have faced

7 Language focus

1 but · 2 because · 3 However · 4 so · 5 Although

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