Environmental Sustainability and Health & Safety FAQ

Spoonflower is proud of our eco-friendly manufacturing process, commitment to lowering waste by-products, and use of non-toxic, water-based pigments. We are also mindful of our relationship to the larger supply chain of goods and services in the world market. As these topics become more common in the social dialogue, it is clear that these values are increasingly important to our artists and community members, and their customers, as well!

Advancements in sustainability and environmental stewardship are in constant change. While we are researching new ideas at Spoonflower to match our own vision, your engaged perspectives may spark something we hadn't yet considered, or even heard about! If you don't find answers to your specific questions below, please reach out!

Frequently Asked Questions

General Questions

▶ Where are your environmental practices most visible?

Our practices for sustainability show up in a variety of ways. You will find more specifics in questions below, but as a print-on-demand company we only print what you order, when you order it. This leads to very little waste overall, and because we are printing onto the fabric rather than dyeing it, the reduction of water usage is significant.

Compare this to most fabric found in a fabric store, which is often shipped on a bolt of yardage and dyed. While these methods have certain short-term advantages for the consumer, the longer term consequences are significant when it comes to resource use and chemicals.

We also make certain that the products we print upon, and the inks we use, align with our ongoing relationship with sustainability. From organic cottons and recycled papers, to low-emission substrates from replenished sources, we are working to ensure that we not only match our goals, but are challenging our company to become ever-more environmentally accountable.

▶ How is Spoonflower's print-on-demand process better for the environment?

Much of the fabric you buy at an in-person retailer is dyed. While there can be aesthetic differences to this way of preparing fabric compared to ours, this process also requires a significant amount of water for every yard produced.

Our digital printing method also saves on materials, overall, compared to methods such as rotary screen printing. In digital printing, ink colors are mixed from 6 - 8 basic colors on the spot as your fabric is printed. This means there is no mixing of colors in advance, like with screen printing, but instead as they are printed directly onto the substrate. This reduces the need for mixing water into large vats of pre-mixed dye, which may or may not have a significant shelf life. This process, as well, reduces the creation of chemical waste, or effluent, that is not easily disposed of into the environment.

▶ Where are your fabrics made?

Spoonflower has established relationships with a select group of vendors from around the world. The country of origin may vary from one substrate to another, and change as we update our relationships. We invite you to link through to each individual product page from the explore Our Fabrics and wallpapers for up-to-date information on Country of Origin.

▶ What is your relationship with these suppliers?

To ensure all our products are safe, we have selected to work with best in-class fabrics, inks and dyes. Spoonflower strives to operate with an ethical manner not just within our product classes, but in all aspects of our business. Although we are not currently able to share certification to demonstrate positive social compliance of the mills that manufacture our materials and fabrics, we have chosen to work with a small number of vendors in whom we have confidence. Due to the complex nature of textile supply chains, gathering compliance information from field to finished product is a work in progress. However, we have confirmed that our preferred vendors source our cotton ethically and are not purchasing from particular regions around the world that follow unfavorable labor practices.

Product Questions

▶ What fabrics are Organic?

We currently offer three organic fabrics. These are Organic Cotton Knit, Organic Cotton Sateen, and Organic Sweet Pea Gauzelt. Along with all of the fabrics we offer, these are sourced from a small group of trusted fabric vendors that observe fair wages and work standards.

▶ Are these organic fabrics GOTS certified?

GOTS, or the Global Organic Textile Standard, is recognized as the most stringent textile standard in the world. GOTS requires verification connected to every step in the manufacturing process. Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, Spoonflower was working to achieve GOTS certification for our three organic fabrics. It should come as no surprise that we lost a bit of momentum, but we plan to continue our pursuit of GOTS certification in the future. Being that this is a benchmark standard, it is certainly something we will share with our community when achieved.

▶ How is the Sport Lycra SPF 50?

The high UPF rating is due to the tightly knitted construction of our fabric. No chemical treatment is applied to this product.

▶ Are any of your products made from recycled materials?

Recycled Canvas is a newer addition to our lineup of fabrics and made from 50% recycled content. Review the Recycled Canvas product page for many important details, as well as the blog post Recycled Canvas: From Plastic Bottles to Eco-Friendly Fabric.

Our Prepasted Removable Smooth Wallpaper is made from 10% post-consumer waste and is fully recyclable.

Important Note: Unlike most peel and stick wallpapers for sale online and in the stores, our Peel and Stick Wallpaper is completely free of vinyl, one of the most toxic plastics for our health and the environment.

▶ Are there any hazardous chemicals in your fabrics, wallpaper or Home Decor?

Our products are Proposition 65 compliant. However, if you make children's products to sell from any of our substrates, you are required to pursue CPSIA testing independently.

Printing and Production Questions

▶ Are hazardous chemicals found in your products or used during the printing process?

None of our substrates contain Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAs). All have passed tests confirming there are no harmful chemicals such as formaldehyde and lead present, and we avoid printing on fabrics with any flame-retardant applications.

None of our fabric and paper substrates contain Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). Although VOCs (i.e. benzene, ethylene glycol, formaldehyde, and toluene) can be found in adhesives and printing inks, we do not use any of these materials at Spoonflower.

▶ What chemicals might be found in the inks that you print with, or in your other product parts not created by the factory?

We print using 100% water-based inks, free of heavy metals, formaldehyde and APE. They are non-hazardous, non-toxic and biodegradable. The inks used for our wallpapers are GREENGuard Gold Certified, an industry standard for low chemical emissions. Our products and inks are Proposition 65 compliant.

Our pillows have been tested for chemical compounds and no warning for Prop 65 is necessary.

▶ Are the inks you use safe for children and pets?

Spoonflower inks have been tested to ensure that they contain none of the substances prohibited by the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) and are safe for infant and pet use. However, because our fabrics have not been treated with fire retardant chemicals, they are not suitable for use in children's sleepwear or bedding.

Important note: Please remember that finished products in their entirety also need to be individually tested for CPSIA compliance if you intend to sell children's items to the public.

▶ Are your products vegan or vegetarian friendly?

Our fabrics, inks and all production processes are completely vegan friendly. This includes any pretreatment processing of our fabrics.

There are two methods of digital textile printing onto fabric. One involves fabric pre-treatment and the other follows an in-line treatment. While some pre-treatment methods in the fabric printing industry require preparations that are not vegan-friendly, Spoonflower has confirmed that our pre-treatment chemistry providers use processes that align to vegan standards. Our in-line treatments are also vegan.

We have confirmed that the paste in our Prepasted Removable Smooth Wallpaper is vegan, as well.

▶ Do you treat your fabrics, wallpapers or Home Decor items with flame retardants or any stain resistant products?

Our fabrics are neither pre- nor post-treated for flame or stain resistance, and like most textiles, these products will burn when exposed to flame or direct heat and are not suitable for use in children's sleepwear or bedding. They are also not suitable for display purposes in public buildings unless you apply such fire retardant after purchase.

No wallpaper is fire-resistant, but all three of our papers have a Class A fire rating. This is the highest ranking for subverting the burning characteristics and flame spread of fire when compared to similar building materials in laboratory settings.

While many home decor products are treated with finishes to help repel stains and water, there is increased concern for health and human safety when exposed to these chemicals. Spoonflower has decided to move away from such treatments for our Home Decor lineup, and while there are alternate solutions slowly emerging, the jury is still out on their safety and efficacy. Therefore, we are not pursuing any stain resistant treatments currently but will consider options as appropriate.

Customers have mentioned they have found luck with stain resistant sprays and UV protection products, but Spoonflower has not tested any of these remedies. Should you make an attempt to use these products we highly recommend spot-checking on an inconspicuous place, or on a piece of discarded fabric prior to applying to the entire product.

Shipping and Delivery

▶ Is the packaging that arrived with my order compostable?

Yes! All tissue, packaging, and notecards from your order are compostable. The notecards and the tissue are also recyclable, if that is your preferred, or only available, option.

▶ What do you do with waste created during the production of your products?

Even with our established methods, we are constantly looking for ways to reduce our environmental footprint at our factories even more.

- All cardboard and rejected Smooth wallpaper that does not match our standards during printing is recycled, as well as the empty ink bottles leftover after printing and all plastic bags used for shipping on our fabric!
- We reuse the fabric cores, whenever possible, if orders for multiple yards need rolling prior to shipping.
- Both the dye sublimation tissue paper and transfer paper used during the printing of our polyester fabrics are being shipped and processed through a third party vendor to be recycled back into paper.

▶ What do you do with leftover and unused fabrics?

Sometimes a fabric order doesn't come out looking exactly the way we think it should because of print errors or flaws in the fabric. When this happens, we send the piece back for reprint and add the flawed piece to our internal stock. Unprinted fabric remnants that cannot be used for production and other Marketplace materials that did not meet our strict standards are often made available to local artists and makers within the Spoonflower family. When this happens, an "order" is placed just as for new fabric, so designers are certain to receive the correct commission for their designs.

Having just moved to our new factory, we are working to upgrade our facilities to implement smoother and more efficient methods of recycling any surplus fabric that does not pass our QA

We are also updating many of our processes in the Berlin factory so that we can recycle with ease and efficiency.

▶ Are your products recyclable?

While our wallpapers do install to last, only Prepasted Removable Smooth can be added to your recycling bin. And while you typically do not have to clean the remaining paste from the paper, it is still a good idea to contact your local waste management company for further information. Recycling methods do vary by region, state and nation and you want to be certain they have the proper facilities.

Being a paper adhered to a woven scrim, our Non-Pasted Traditional Pebble is a mixed media product and cannot be recycled.

The Peel and Stick Wallpaper and its installation backing *cannot* be recycled.

Questions from Sellers

▶ Can I choose to only sell my designs on your Organic products?

This is not something we are able to offer at this time.

▶ Does Spoonflower have a statement on fast fashion or seek to limit how your products are used by customers?

The larger fashion, Home Decor and textile marketplace is a complex interweaving of products representing a variety of brands, environmental perspectives and cultures. While we work with any and all artists and customers, it is not necessarily our role to decide how our products are used. By nature of our print-on-demand, local-made structure, we are more of a luxury good and based on cost alone do not cater well to the trend of fast fashion.

That said, our larger value system may best be reflected through our Small Business Grant Recipients. Twice a year we award a collection of artists, designers and entrepreneurs with access to Spoonflower printing and products that will help further their creative development.

We are also inspired by Fashion Revolution. You might have noticed when we shared our connection with this movement in a recent social media post How a Global Movement is Changing the Fashion Industry.

▶ Do you have any projects or gift ideas with a reusable or environmentally-friendly refocus?

The Spoonflower blog is a great resource for all sorts of information. You might want to start with Custom Eco-Friendly Projects and then search for projects suited to your style from there!

See Also: How It Works

See Also: Sustainability Is at the Heart of All We Do

See Also: Explore Our Products

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