



CONSUMER

## Greener Options: Shopping for Sustainable Furniture



People around the world are becoming more concerned with their carbon footprint, but we still don't know all the ways we can reduce waste. One option? Choose sustainable furniture that is beautiful, functional, and reusable.

### What Is Sustainable Furniture?

Sustainable furniture is built on the premise of closed-loop recycling, where furniture can be reused under different circumstances or eventually disassembled and recycled in an environmentally conscious way.

During manufacturing, the materials used are recycled or obtained through sustainable harvesting practices. Once made, the furniture has a long life cycle and can be cleaned and reused multiple times. The goal of sustainable furniture is to reduce landfill waste while sourcing materials in an eco-friendly way. You won't get that with **fast furniture**, which isn't a solution for long-term environmental preservation.

### 3 Questions to Ask When Shopping for Green Furniture

When shopping for green furniture, you need to know the right questions to ask to make sure the product you are buying or renting follows sustainable practices.

#### What Is It Made Of?



Did you know that 80% of a product's environmental impact is derived from how its materials are sourced and used? Or that furniture is the third largest contributor to deforestation? You want to find furniture that comes from certified, reclaimed, North American woods where there is responsible forest management.

Find leather goods that are processed with vegetable tans rather than the toxic process typically used in leather production, during which chromium salts can pollute streams and rivers. Also, finding leather products that aren't transported all over the globe—tanning in Europe, production in Asia, distribution in the U.S., for example—helps to cut back on carbon emissions.

Avoid textiles that are manufactured using toxic chemicals. Be sure that even natural fibers are free from chemical use. Textile production accounts for more water pollution than any other industry, but can be greatly reduced by choosing products with GOTS and OekoTex certifications.

#### How Was It Made?



Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) have a high vapor pressure with low water solubility. These are highly toxic and can be avoided by choosing furniture with no VOC finishes. This usually means choosing a water-based finish.

Many products are treated with fire retardants, which are toxic and linked to serious diseases such as cancer and neurological disorders. Choosing furniture that doesn't use chemical fire retardants can actually create a safer home.

#### Where Was It Made, and By Who?



Like the leather goods we spoke of earlier, when a material is sourced in one country, transported to another for processing, then moved elsewhere for manufacturing before finally being shipped for distribution—that takes a huge toll on the environment. Look for locally sourced or North American-made products.

You also want to know the conditions under which products are made. Is there a Social Equity Code of Conduct providing assurances that workers have safe and fair working conditions? Read through a company's mission statement or website to see if it has a commitment to sustainability and green manufacturing processes.

### What If I Can't Afford Sustainable Furniture?

Because of the extra steps often required for green production, most sustainable furniture is more expensive and not always an investment everyone can afford. Ask companies about layaway capabilities and financing programs.

If you still can't afford something new, realize that sustainable furniture is built to last and you could be better off purchasing something secondhand.

The good news is you also have the option to rent sustainable furniture. Brook Furniture Rental is dedicated to sustainable practices and will help you find stylish decor without breaking the bank.

### Bottom Line

Investing in sustainable furniture requires you to take the time and put in the work to know if something is truly a green product. But when you use Brook, you don't need to worry about sustainability, whether it's a dining table or a sofa. Our goal is to minimize toxic chemical use and reduce waste in landfills. And our representatives are always happy to help you find the right furniture for your needs.

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