

SUSTAINABLE T-SHIRT PURCHASING GUIDELINES

WHY SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING PURCHASING MATTERS

The fashion industry accounts for about 10% of global carbon emissions, nearly 20% of wastewater ([source](#)) and is notorious for exploitive labor practices ([source](#)). UVM purchases approximately 14,000 promotional t-shirts alone each academic year, in addition to thousands of other UVM branded clothing purchases. These purchases are currently based on the criteria of cost and shirt design; however, this page will outline some additional criteria to consider when purchasing UVM branded clothing.

DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is a way of operating that focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future. Sustainability is measured along three principles: the economy, society, and the environment. Sustainable apparel is made in a way that does no further damage to the environment or the communities responsible for manufacturing that apparel. This could include organic or recycled materials, local sourcing, or health, safety, and wage protections for workers.

For our purposes, the most important sustainable features to watch for are (in order of importance):

- Fabric composition
- Product-Achieved Certifications
- Company-Achieved Certifications

MOST SUSTAINABLE CHOICES RECOMMENDED BY UVM

Supplier (in order of recommended)	Product	Sustainable Features
Allmade	All products are made with sustainable fabric and certified processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- B-Corporation- Supplier Disclosure Information- Labor Practice Disclosure
Econscious	All Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Supplier Disclosure Information- Labor Practice Disclosure
Royal Apparel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Short Sleeve ORGANIC Pocket Tee- Short Sleeve ORGANIC Tee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Many GOTS Certified products

LOCAL VENDORS TO WORK WITH

Company	Phone Number	Email	Vendors/Products Used
Deerfield Design	802-496-4224	info@deerfelddesigns.com	Royal Apparel Organics Econscious
Image Outfitters (B-Corp)	802-253-8369	esbert@image-outfitters.com	Allmade Will source any shirt for you
Kevin Smith Sports	802-524-3312 ext 22	eddie@kevinsmithsports.com	Allmade Alphabroder
Select Design	518.774.6310	eshwajlyk@selectdesign.com	Allmade Port & Co
Willington	802-651-1795	beth@willingtonprint.com	Royal Apparel Tutlex 202 Hanes Eco Smart 5170, 5% recycled poly from plastic bottles

SUSTAINABLE FABRIC CHOICES

The fabric used in the composition of the clothing impacts the inherent resource consumption of manufacturing the clothing item. The following table highlights which fabrics are the most sustainable and why; listed in order of most to least sustainable.

Fabric	Sustainable Features
Recycled Cotton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made from previously used cotton - The re-use saves significant amounts of water
Organic Cotton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made without harmful fertilizers - Recycled Organic Cotton is the most sustainable - Important to look for additional certifications (next section)
Organic Hemp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fast growing plant which needs few resources - Good for soil health
Tencel® (Lyocell)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A type of rayon manufactured with more ethical practices - Plant based
Recycled Polyester (rPET)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made of recycled plastic bottles – i.e. diverts plastic from landfills
Ringspun Cotton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made to be more durable than traditional cotton, thus there is a longer lifespan


FABRICS TO AVOID

Fabrics	Sustainability Features
Uncertified Cotton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water-intensive - Chemically intensive - Labor intensive
Uncertified Wool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Desertification and animal rights abuse implications
Uncertified Leather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chemical intensive - Cattle are a significant contributor to greenhouse gases - Deforestation
Rayon/Viscose/Modal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Made from wood pulp - Chemical/energy/water intense process - Deforestation impacts
Bamboo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Heavily chemically intensive process to convert bamboo into retail fibers
Polyester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Petroleum (oil) based fabric

IMPORTANT CERTIFICATIONS TO LOOK FOR

In addition to sustainable fabrics, certifications (both won by a product or by a brand) are very important to consider. Certifications will take a wholesome look at a material's production, which includes the environmental footprint as well as the labor practices across a product's/brand's value chain.

Below is a table showing which certifications to look for when purchasing clothing from most sustainable (best) to least sustainable (not recommended)

Certification	Sustainable Features	Sustainability Ranking
<u>Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worldwide Leading Standard for Organic Fibers - Rigorous employment standards - Third party certification 	Best 
<u>US Cotton Trust</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourages and helps maintain transparency across the cotton supply chain - Provides quality and trackable metrics towards improvement - Aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals 	Better
<u>Worldwide Responsible</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Third party auditing and certification regarding supply chain standards 	Better

<u>Accredited Program (WRAP)</u>	- Thorough workplace labor & environmental standards	
<u>Fair Labor Association (FLA)</u>	- Third party organization that maps, audits, and enforces ethical labor practices across the supply chain	Better
<u>Better Cotton Initiative (BCI)</u>	- Encourages farmers on more sustainable cotton farming practices - Corporate certification	Acceptable
<u>Cotton LEADS</u>	- Promoting and measuring sustainably grown cotton in the US and Australia	Acceptable
<u>Global Sustainability Consortium (GSC)</u>	- Hanes specific certification	Not recommended

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Sustain your Style.* ["Our Fiber Eco Review"](#)
- *The Good Trade.* ["12 Sustainable Materials and Fabrics You Should Know"](#)
- *Eco-Stylist.* ["A Guide to the Most And Least Sustainable Fabrics"](#)