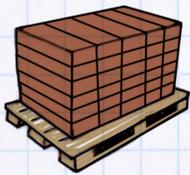


# The 12 Product Rules

These 12 product rules provide a simple approach to selecting better, healthier, and more environmentally responsible building products and materials. They are offered in the spirit of author Michael Pollan's Food Rules, which applies memorable rules of thumb to complex dietary decisions.

\* Choose products that are fully disclosed...



1. If you are buying more than a ton of it, know its carbon footprint.

Don't drive yourself crazy over every detail. Focus on the biggest drivers of greenhouse gas emissions, like the structural system.



2. If you don't know what's inside it, don't put it inside.

There are only so many ingredient lists you can read. Focus on interiors, where occupant exposure might be an issue.



3. Buy the company—not just the product.

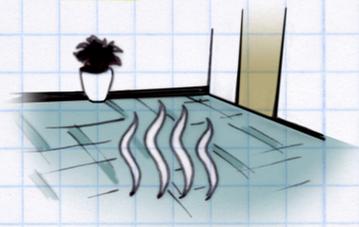
A token "eco" line isn't enough anymore. Look at manufacturers' overarching sustainability practices.

...and mostly optimized...



4. Close the loop.

Consider the whole product cycle—not just where it comes from but also where it is likely to go after demolition.



5. Minimize exposure to the worst substances.

Avoid getting overwhelmed. Focus on VOCs, with their high exposure potential, and the most-toxic chemicals (like those that are biopersistent or carcinogenic).



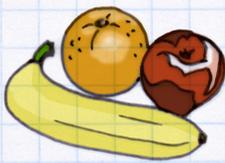
6. If it runs or flows, efficiency comes first.

For some products (plumbing, HVAC, lighting, and appliances), operational efficiency matters most.



7. Don't freak out.

Almost anything can be toxic. Red flags are sometimes red herrings.



8. Compare with care.

We'd love to be able to compare apples to apples. But there are too many oranges in the mix, so look for significant differences between products.



9. Let someone else do the work.

Use well-developed research tools. Know that a robust multi-attribute certification might be the best way to judge a product's sustainability.

...but not too much.



10. Use less; just use it better.

What's the surest way to reduce the impact of a product? Don't buy it.



11. Durability and resilience live on.

Sometimes it's worth a bigger initial impact if the product will stand up to the test of time ... and weather.

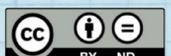


12. Perfection is the enemy.

You can't do it all. Prioritize specific product and material goals with the owner and project team, and know when to compromise.

The 12 Product Rules were developed by Jennifer Atlee; Anne Hicks Harney, FAIA; Paula Melton; and Kirsten Ritchie, P.E. Design by Julia Jandrisits

For more on selecting sustainable and healthy products, visit [www.BuildingGreen.com/productrules](http://www.BuildingGreen.com/productrules)



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