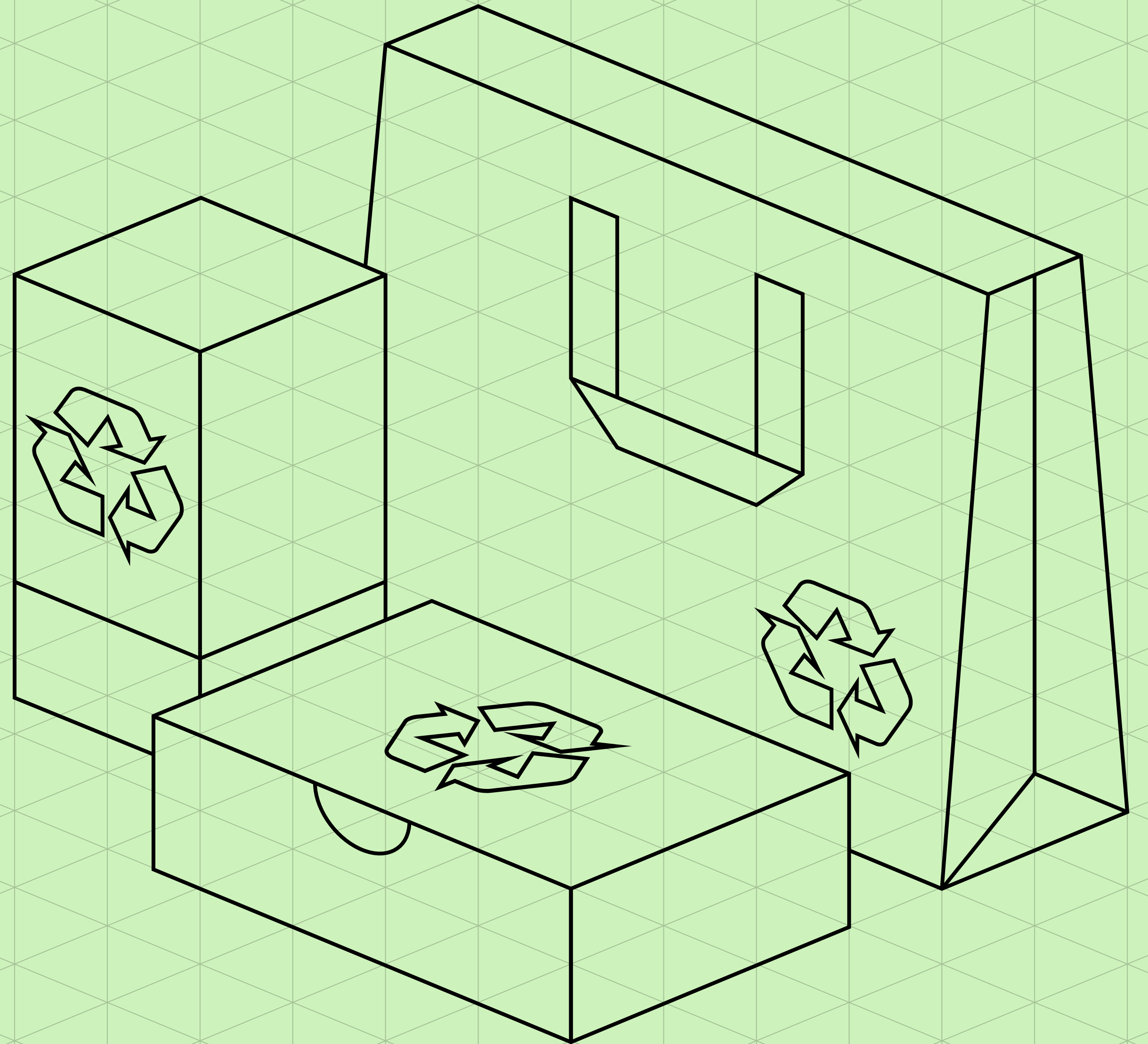


HOW TO SPECIFY SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

Your 4-step help guide to specifying sustainable packaging.



PROGRESS

PACKAGING > PARTNERS

STEP 1

START WITH A COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is no longer optional – it's essential. For creative and luxury brands, packaging has become a visible extension of brand values. Today's consumers expect more than aesthetic appeal; they want to see environmental responsibility in every layer.

At Progress Packaging, we help brands respond to this shift – offering packaging that's both planet-conscious and premium. This guide outlines the key steps to help you make smarter, more sustainable choices at every stage of your luxury packaging solutions journey.

We don't just keep up with sustainable innovation – we help define it. Whether you're developing your first eco-friendly custom packaging project or scaling a fully certified global solution, we're here to help you do it better, smarter, and more sustainably.



Luxury watch packaging for Fiona Krüger, made with sustainable Notpla seaweed paper, that's fully kerbside recyclable and home compostable.

HERE’S WHY SUSTAINABILITY SHOULD BE CENTRAL TO YOUR PACKAGING STRATEGY:



Card tuck-in closure replacing the use of magnets, to ensure the pack was fully recyclable.

ELEVATE YOUR BRAND STORY

Choosing sustainable luxury packaging helps reinforce your values of creativity, ethical sourcing, and innovation. It’s a powerful brand differentiator that reflects a commitment to bespoke packaging for luxury brands with purpose.

FUTURE-PROOF YOUR SUPPLY CHAIN

Working with sustainable packaging suppliers ensures transparency, traceability, and long-term resilience. Material innovations like seaweed-based packaging and mushroom inserts make your packaging relevant to tomorrow’s standards.

MEET YOUR CONSUMERS EXPECTATIONS

From eco-friendly gift boxes to plastic-free packaging, conscious consumers want to see evidence of responsibility. Including recyclable, compostable, or reusable packaging options increases brand trust and loyalty.

REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT WITHOUT COMPROMISING QUALITY

Our eco-friendly custom packaging methods allow brands to maintain a premium finish while reducing waste and carbon emissions.

ALIGN WITH INDUSTRY STANDARDS & PARTNERS

As a B Corp certified packaging company, Progress supports the broader industry agenda, from the [Walpole Sustainability Manifesto](#) to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#). Our team helps align your tailored packaging solutions with globally recognised certifications such as FSC certified packaging.

STEP 2

MAKE YOUR PACKAGING SUSTAINABLE

At Progress, sustainability is embedded into every format we produce – from launch mailers to collector’s cases.

We work across beauty, fashion, fragrance, drinks and more – guiding brands toward more circular, low-impact formats, without compromising brand impact or commercial goals. Whether you’re scaling custom printed packaging globally or creating a limited edition capsule, sustainability starts with format selection.



RIGID BOXES

Ideal for luxury packaging solutions, rigid boxes deliver structural integrity and shelf appeal. With FSC certified packaging options, plastic-free linings, and recyclable finishes, they’re a core format for premium brands. For more inspiration, explore our rigid box projects [here](#).

V-FORM RIGID BOXES

Exclusively by Progress, the V-FORM process works by scoring a V-shaped groove into heavy-weight board to enable a number of key benefits including sharp folds and seamless joins. V-FORM creates new opportunities to develop more eco-friendly and distinctive designs for custom rigid boxes and luxury packaging boxes.

The V-FORM process reduces the need for excessive layering, saving on materials and improving the environmental footprint – perfect for eco-friendly packaging solutions. For more inspiration, explore our V-FORM rigid box projects [here](#).

CORRUGATE BOXES

Lightweight, protective, and fully recyclable, corrugate boxes are perfect for e-commerce. Using mono-material construction helps reduce waste and optimise shipping. For more inspiration, explore our corrugate box projects [here](#).

CARTON BOXES

Carton packaging is a flexible format for cosmetics, fashion accessories and small goods. We often incorporate recycled content and uncoated paper stocks to boost sustainability. For more inspiration, explore our carton box projects [here](#).

TRAYS & FITMENTS

Swap out plastic and foam inserts for cardboard-based alternatives or pulp-board options. Not only do these materials help ensure your packaging is fully recyclable, but they also offer excellent protection and enhance product presentation. For further info, read our insight on [Setting Your Packaging Standards](#).

WOODEN BOXES

A favourite in premium packaging design for the drinks and gifting sectors. Sourced from responsibly managed forests and finished with eco-friendly printing, they’re as reusable as they are beautiful. For more inspiration, explore our wooden box projects [here](#).



CARRIER BAGS

Our luxury carrier bag manufacturing combines premium finish with sustainable integrity. We produce custom carrier bags for high-end retail, fashion, gifting, and hospitality using eco-conscious materials such as FSC certified kraft paper and uncoated stocks. As part of our sustainability-first approach, we offer [plastic-free handle alternatives](#), including twisted or flat paper handles, to ensure the entire bag remains recyclable and biodegradable.

These bags can be elevated with eco-friendly finishes – such as water-based lamination, soy-based inks, and foil-free detailing – without compromising on brand impact. Designed for both aesthetics and recyclability, our eco carrier bags deliver standout presentation while supporting your brand’s environmental goals. With extensive experience in sustainable bag production, we guide brands through every stage from material sourcing to finishing and global logistics. For more inspiration, explore our carrier bag projects [here](#).



TOTE BAGS

We produce custom tote bags in a range of eco-friendly materials including recycled cotton and organic canvas. These eco tote bag solutions are suited to any sector but are particularly popular for fashion, beauty, drinks, retail, hospitality and gifting brands – offering a reusable, long-lasting alternative to traditional bags.

Our service covers everything from material sourcing to global delivery, making us a trusted tote bag manufacturer in the UK for luxury brands focused on sustainability, quality and function. For more inspiration, explore our tote bag projects [here](#).



MAILERS

Mailers are essential for direct-to-consumer brands. Compostable and recyclable mailers reduce environmental impact without losing the brand’s tactile signature. For more inspiration, explore our mailers projects [here](#).



CASES, MENUS & ACCESSORIES

From paper based card holders to FSC certified menus and eco-friendly gift boxes, we create made-to-measure packaging that balances sustainability with style. For more inspiration, explore our [cases](#), [menus](#) and [accessories](#) projects.



STEP 3

SELECT THE RIGHT MATERIALS

Sustainable materials define the environmental performance of your packaging.

From source traceability to end-of-life recyclability, Progress ensures your tailored packaging solutions are underpinned by materials that elevate both look and impact. Choosing well also increases the likelihood your packaging will be accepted and processed by recyclers, preventing landfill waste.



Double-ply natural Kraft
mailers and FSC® B-flute
transit boxes, flexo printed
in black inside and out.

FSC CERTIFIED PAPER & BOARD

A staple of luxury packaging solutions, FSC certified stocks provide guaranteed responsible sourcing. Most of our formats are already FSC certified or can be adapted to be so.

NOTPLA (SEAWEED-BASED MATERIAL)

This innovative material is biodegradable and ideal for protective inserts or linings. As a leader in sustainable packaging solutions, we incorporate Notpla wherever appropriate to replace plastic.

RECYCLED SOLID BOARD

Strong, tactile and eco-friendly, recycled solid board is a trusted choice for bespoke packaging for luxury brand – from perfume boxes to keepsake kits.

MUSHROOM PACKAGING

For clients seeking next-gen sustainability, this compostable, cradle-to-cradle material is perfect for protective inner trays in fragile or high-value products.

UNCOATED PAPER STOCKS

These stocks provide a luxurious finish while being fully kerbside recyclable. Ideal for eco-friendly custom packaging, especially where tactility is key.



Pressed paper inserts to secure products inside a box are an eco-friendly option to plastic and can be customised to suit any product.

CONTOUR
An interior hardware collection

JOSEPH GILES

Solid recycled board is the go-to option for strong, tactile and eco-friendly custom rigid packaging.

STEP 4

USE ECO PRINT PROCESSES

Sustainability doesn't end with materials. At Progress, we use print methods that uphold your creative vision while reducing environmental impact.

Our expert team helps select finishes that elevate your brand while ensuring your custom printed packaging remains low-carbon and recyclable.



Uncoated papers maximise
tactility on custom rigid
boxes and bespoke retail
carrier bags.

HERE ARE SOME ECO PRINT PROCESSES WE RECOMMEND CONSIDERING:



Identity and text details printed using water-based inks.

SOY & VEGETABLE-BASED INKS

These natural inks are ideal for paper-based formats. They lower VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) emissions and allow packaging to remain fully recyclable – an essential feature in eco-friendly printing.

WATER-BASED COATINGS

Water-based finishes are biodegradable and avoid harmful laminates. Perfect for maintaining quality in premium packaging design without adding microplastics.

LOW-VOC UV INKS

Our low-VOC (Volatile Organic Compound) options reduce environmental impact without compromising colour fidelity. Ideal for brands wanting premium without the pollution.

FOIL-FREE EMBELLISHMENT

Embossing, debossing and sustainable print finishes deliver texture and prestige, minus the recycling issues associated with metallic foils. Great for recyclable foil alternatives.

DIGITAL & SHORT-RUN PRINTING

This efficient method is perfect for bespoke luxury brand packaging, allowing waste reduction on small-scale launches while keeping timelines flexible.

CHECK- LIST

START PLANNING YOUR SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

Creating sustainable packaging requires early consideration of materials, processes, and end-of-life outcomes. This checklist will help ensure you’ve addressed the key areas discussed in the guide.

PURPOSE & PRODUCT FIT



- Consider what your packaging needs to achieve – protection, presentation, or promotion.
- Make sure your design is the right size for your product to avoid unnecessary material use.
- Review how your product will be transported and stored to ensure efficiency.

MATERIALS



- Choose responsibly sourced materials such as FSC® or PEFC-certified papers and boards.
- Consider using recycled or recyclable materials where possible.
- Avoid combining different substrates that make recycling more difficult.
- Reduce plastic use wherever possible.

FINISHES



- Avoid plastic laminates, metallic foils, or magnetic closures if you want your packaging to be suitable for single-stream recycling.
- Opt for uncoated papers or water-based coatings where appropriate.

DESIGN FOR END OF LIFE



- Ensure your packaging can be easily recycled through existing waste streams.
- Avoid elements that prevent recyclability, such as glued plastics or laminated layers.
- Clearly label materials or provide disposal instructions to help end users recycle correctly.

BUDGETING & TIMELINES



- Allow extra time for sourcing sustainable materials and approving samples.
- Consider that sustainable options can vary in cost and availability.
- Discuss timelines with your supplier early to ensure realistic production schedules.

TALK TO OUR PACKAGING EXPERTS

**START PLANNING YOUR SUSTAINABLE
PACKAGING**

We can help you with all aspects of your custom packaging, from advising on the design, specifying and budgeting, prototyping and engineering, printing and production, to fulfilment and worldwide delivery – we've got it all covered.

Progress have over 25 years experience across all aspects of luxury packaging and understand what's involved in producing high specification complex projects.

GET IN TOUCH

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