

A Quick Guide for Responsible Music Products

HOW TO CREATE VINYL & CDS THAT FANS LOVE - WITH LOWER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

1. Press Mindfully

- **Press only what you're confident you can sell** 🎯 don't over produce, scarcity is better than waste
- **Question minimum order quantities** that often drive overproduction
- **Avoid producing for single-use** promotional purposes
- **Avoid pressing multiple color variants** primarily to encourage fans to buy several copies of the same release - this creates waste by design
- The most sustainable release is one pressed **thoughtfully**, in a quantity that reflects **real demand**.

WHY IT MATTERS

Overproduction is the single biggest driver of waste in physical music. Unsold records and CDs are often destroyed or downcycled, regardless of how "sustainable" they were to make.

2. Choose Lower-Impact Vinyl Products

- **Avoid virgin PVC**, choose recycled content or regrind over virgin material
- Investigate pressing on **low-carbon alternatives** to traditional PVC; **Bio-attributed PVC** (often referred to as BioVinyl) reduces reliance on virgin fossil fuels, but still creating a chemically identical product; **Injection molded PET** records reduce emissions by up to 42% and use significantly less energy than traditional pressing
- Press on **140g vinyl instead of 180g**
- Choose standard sleeves over gatefolds, unless there's a strong creative reason

WHY IT MATTERS

Vinyl records are made from polyvinyl chloride (PVC), a fossil-fuel-derived plastic with a high carbon footprint. They're often shipped long distances, which is why lighter products with fewer materials can significantly reduce overall impact.

3. Choose Lower-Impact CD Products

- For CDs, the disc itself is more or less the same worldwide
- Use **plastic-free packaging** such as softpaks and **avoid jewel cases**, which use hard plastics that don't recycle well in most systems
- Ensure all paper parts are **recycled, recyclable, and/or FSC-certified**

WHY IT MATTERS

Softpaks can reduce impact by up to 95% and are easier to recycle if unsold. Since the peak of CD sales in 2000, billions of units have been discarded. Sustainability can be built into the future of their design.

4. Press Local. Ship Slow.

- Vinyl is heavy. Plan production timelines to **avoid air freight**, which is costly and has high emissions
- **Press close to where the record will be sold**, potentially investigating a split pressing across multiple territories
- Choose manufacturers that: Use renewable energy, Manage waste responsibly, Can clearly explain material choices, Uphold strong labor, health and safety standards across their supply chain

WHY IT MATTERS

Freight can quickly erase gains made through better materials. Air freight has significantly higher emissions than sea or land transport. According to the VRMA, air freighting vinyl records across territories can more than triple the record's carbon footprint.

5. Choose Plastic-Free Packaging

- Avoid plastics and bioplastics when mailing records
- Where shrink wrap isn't required, supply records unwrapped (e.g. tour or mail-order stock)
- If protection is needed, opt for paper wrapping or reusable recycled plastic sleeves
- Use **recycled, recyclable, or FSC-certified protective packaging, paper mailers, and paper tape**

WHY IT MATTERS

Single-use plastics remain a major source of pollution. Many bio-plastics don't break down as advertised and still contribute to plastic waste.

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If You Only Do 5 Things:

1. Press only what you're confident you can sell.
2. Ask your pressing plant about low-carbon alternatives.
3. If pressing standard PVC, choose recycled 140g.
4. CD softpaks reduce packaging emissions by up to 95%.
5. Make local. Ship slow. Avoid air freight

* Remember there's nuance to every decision; the full guide provides more clarity.

RATING	OPTION	WHY
★	TRADITIONAL PVC	Industry standard — fossil fuel derived, high emissions, difficult to recycle
★★	REGRIND / ECO-MIX	Reduces production waste but still relies on virgin PVC
★★★	RECYCLED PVC	Uses reclaimed records or unsold stock, not just factory offcuts — true closed-loop recycling
★★★★	BIO-ATTRIBUTED PVC	Reduces fossil feedstocks significantly, but chemically identical to PVC at end of life
★★★★★	INJECTION MOULDED PET (Emerging)	~42% lower emissions, electrified manufacturing — note: no multi-colour variants or unique effects possible
★★★★★	EVOVINYL (Emerging)	PVC-free plant-based polymer — lowest emissions, but audio quality still developing

Resources

[The Responsible Merch Guide](#) is our portal where you can get the detailed guide, view case studies, and browse our Supplier Database to find **manufacturers, printers, suppliers and production partners** who can help deliver lower-impact merchandise. Already have a supplier? Ask them about these recommendations.

