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ESG Terminology for Creatives & Freelancers

A Simple Guide to Understanding ESG Terms

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ENVIRONMENTAL (E): These terms relate to your impact on the **planet** — how your work affects nature, resources, and the environment.

Term	Definition	Relevance to Creatives
Carbon Footprint	The total greenhouse gas emissions caused by an individual, organization, or activity.	Your digital uploads, device usage, and travel contribute to your carbon footprint.
Digital Carbon Footprint	Emissions generated by using the internet, cloud services, and digital devices.	Includes video streaming, uploading large files, and data center energy use.
Green Hosting	Web hosting services that use renewable energy or offset their carbon emissions.	Choose eco-friendly hosting for your website or blog.
Renewable Energy	Energy from sources that naturally replenish, like solar, wind, or hydro power.	Supports cleaner energy use for your tools and platforms.
Sustainable Practices	Actions that meet present needs without harming future generations.	Using less energy, reducing waste, and choosing green tools.
E-Waste	Discarded electronic devices like old laptops, phones, or hard drives.	Recycle or donate old tech instead of throwing it away.
Paperless Workflow	Conducting business digitally without printing physical documents.	Use tools like Google Docs, Notion, and digital contracts.

SOCIAL (S): These terms relate to your impact on **people** — how you interact with your audience, clients, collaborators, and communities.

Term	Definition	Relevance to Creatives
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)	Promoting fair representation, equal opportunities, and respect for all individuals.	Ensure your content, collaborations, and community include diverse voices.
Inclusivity	Creating content or services that are accessible and welcoming to people of all backgrounds.	Use captions, alt text, and consider cultural sensitivity.
Well-being	Physical, mental, and emotional health.	Take care of your mental health and encourage your audience to do the same.
Social Responsibility	The obligation to act in ways that benefit society.	Support good causes, give back, and avoid harmful content.
Community Engagement	Actively interacting with and supporting your audience or followers.	Build trust by responding to comments, asking for feedback, and creating meaningful content.
Ethical Labor	Ensuring fair treatment, wages, and conditions for workers (including yourself and any team members).	Pay freelancers on time, avoid exploitation, and set fair rates.

GOVERNANCE (G): These terms relate to **how you run your business** — your ethics, decision-making, and accountability.

Term	Definition	Relevance to Creatives
Governance	The systems and processes used to run an organization or business responsibly.	Even as a solo creator, you should have clear values and ethical guidelines.
Transparency	Being open and honest about your actions, decisions, and business practices.	Disclose sponsorships, affiliations, and business policies clearly.
Accountability	Taking responsibility for your actions and decisions.	Admit mistakes, correct them, and keep your promises to your audience.
Ethics	Moral principles that guide your behavior and decisions.	Avoid misleading content, respect copyright, and don't promote harmful products.
Data Privacy	Protecting personal information collected from clients, subscribers, or users.	Follow privacy laws, use secure tools, and don't misuse data.
Conflict of Interest	A situation where your personal interests could interfere with your professional responsibilities.	Don't promote products you don't believe in just for money.
Compliance	Following laws, regulations, and ethical standards.	Stay informed about rules like GDPR if you collect user data.
Disclosure	Clearly stating when content is sponsored, affiliated, or paid for.	Required by law in many countries and builds trust with your audience.

GENERAL ESG TERMS

Term	Definition	Relevance to Creatives
ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance)	A framework for evaluating the impact and ethics of a business or individual.	Helps you build a responsible, values-driven brand.
Sustainability	Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the future.	A broad goal that ESG helps measure and achieve.
Impact	The effect your actions or business have on people, the planet, or society.	Focus on creating positive impact through your work..
Stakeholders	Anyone affected by your business — including clients, audience, collaborators, and community.	Consider their needs and perspectives in your decisions.
Greenwashing	Making false or exaggerated claims about being environmentally friendly.	Be honest and authentic about your ESG efforts.
Triple Bottom Line	A business approach that values People, Planet and Profit equally.	A great mindset for creators who want to balance success with purpose.
Purpose-Driven	A business or brand guided by a mission beyond profit.	Align your work with causes or values that matter to you.

How to Use This Cheat Sheet:

- **In Your Content:** Educate your audience with simple ESG terms.
- **In Your Branding:** Highlight your commitment to sustainability and ethics.
- **In Client Meetings:** Communicate your values using clear ESG language.
- **In Your Business Planning:** Use these terms to guide ethical decision-making.

Pro Tip



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- You don't need to be an expert to start.
- Begin with one area; like reducing your digital footprint or supporting a social cause; and build from there.

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