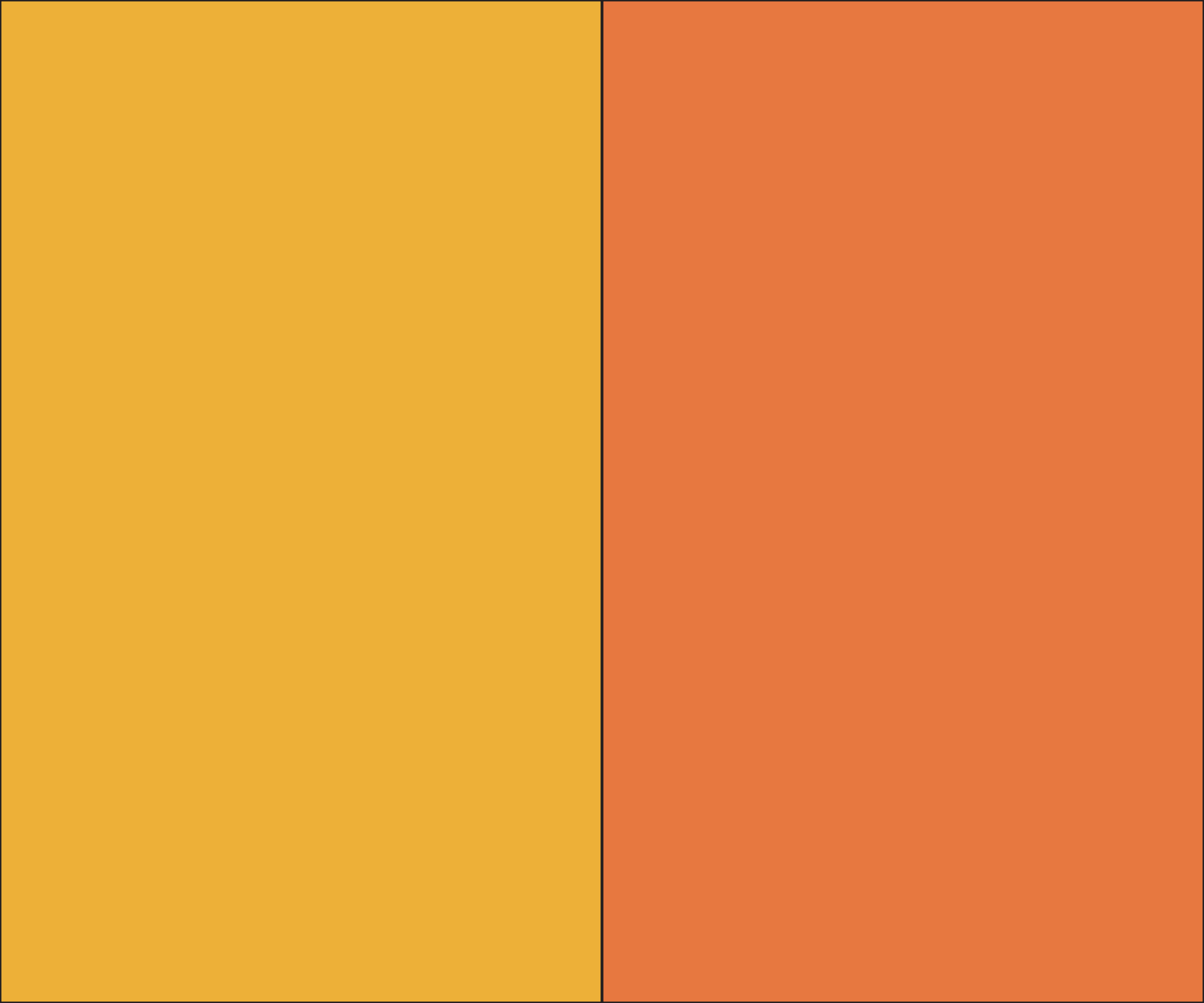


CREATE WITH COMPLIANCE

PACKAGING PLAYBOOK





PACKAGING ISN'T JUST PROTECTION — IT'S A PROMISE.

This playbook outlines the key rules that keep packaging transparent, safe, sustainable, and retail-ready. By pairing creativity with compliance, brands can deliver packaging that looks great, performs well, and meets every requirement with confidence.

What's inside?

-  Labeling & Disclosure Regulations
-  Sustainability & Environmental Claims
-  Safety, Materials, and Toxicity Regulations
-  Barcodes & Retail Readiness
-  Logistics, Shipping, and Hazmat
-  Country- or Region-Specific Regulations
-  Industry-Specific Requirements

Labeling & Disclosure Regulations

Clear, accurate labeling is the foundation of compliant packaging. These regulations ensure consumers receive essential information – what the product is, what’s inside, and who made it – presented consistently and truthfully.

U.S. Fair Packaging and Labeling Act (FPLA)

- Requires consumer packaging to include:
- Product identity
- Net quantity (weight, volume, or count)
- Name and address of manufacturer/distributor
- Units in both metric and U.S. customary measures

FDA Packaging & Labeling (for food, supplements, cosmetics, drugs)

Rules depend on the product category, but commonly include:

- Ingredient statements
- Nutrition Facts or Supplement Facts (FDA-format specific)
- Allergen labeling
- Warnings and usage directions
- Lot coding & expiration dates

FTC Regulations (truth-in-advertising)

- Claims must be truthful, non-misleading, and substantiated
- Applies to packaging claims: “eco-friendly,” “non-toxic,” “organic,” “biodegradable,” “hypoallergenic,” etc.

Helpful Resources

<https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/rules/fair-packaging-labeling-act-regulations-under-section-4-fair-packaging-labeling-act>

<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-ingredients-packaging>

<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/topics/truth-advertising>

Sustainability & Environmental Claims

Communicate a brand's commitment to eco-friendly practices and the positive impact of its products or services on the environment. Clear, accurate, and verifiable claims are essential to build consumer trust and comply with regulations aimed at preventing greenwashing.

FTC Green Guides

If the box makes environmental claims, it must comply with:

- Clear, specific language
- No vague terms like “green,” “clean,” or “eco” without evidence
- Restrictions on recyclability, compostability, carbon-neutral claims

State-level laws

- California SB 54 & recyclability labeling
- New York packaging
- EPR laws
- Restrictions on Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), plastics, or “forever chemicals” in packaging

Helpful Resources

<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/topics/truth-advertising/green-guides>

<https://calrecycle.ca.gov/packaging/packaging-epr/>

<https://www.nylcv.org/news/pass-the-packaging-reduction-and-recycling-infrastructure-act/>

<https://blog.sourceintelligence.com/packaging-epr-laws-in-the-us>

<https://www.packagingdigest.com/food-safety/unpacking-pfas-food-packaging-regulations-in-the-us>

Safety, Materials, and Toxicity Regulations

Ensure that products meet strict standards to protect consumer health and the environment from harmful substances. Compliance with these rules is critical to prevent risks, avoid legal penalties, and maintain product integrity in the marketplace.

FDA's Food Contact Substance Regulations (if packaging touches food)

- Material safety (paper, coatings, adhesives, inks)
- Migration limits

Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

Covers packaging for:

- Children's products
- Toys
- Hazardous materials

Restrictions may include:

- Heavy metals (lead, cadmium)
- Choking hazard warnings
- Child-resistant packaging (CRP)

Toxics in Packaging Clearinghouse (TPCH)

Adopted in many U.S. states:

- Limits heavy metals (Pb, Cd, Hg, Cr⁶)
- Applies to printing inks, dyes, coatings, adhesives

Helpful Resources

<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-ingredients-packaging/food-packaging-other-substances-come-contact-food-information-consumers>

<https://www.cpsc.gov/Business--Manufacturing/Business-Education/Business-Guidance/PPPA/Guide-to-Special-Packaging>

<https://toxicsinpackaging.org>

Barcodes & Retail Readiness

Ensure that barcodes meet industry standards for accurate scanning and seamless retail integration. Proper barcode implementation is essential for product traceability, inventory management, and meeting retailer requirements to achieve retail readiness.

General Specification (GS1) Standards

Most boxes must comply with:

- UPC (Universal Product Code) and EAN (European Article Number) placement and quiet zones
- Barcode size requirements
- Print contrast & scannability standards
- Serialized codes (for pharmaceuticals or high-value goods)

Retailer-specific requirements

Walmart, Target, Amazon, Costco require:

- Specific box strength/shipping tests
- Side or front placement rules
- Shelf-ready packaging standards (SRP)

Helpful Resources

<https://www.gs1.org/standards>

<https://www.gs1us.org/upcs-barcodes-prefixes/ean-vs-upc>

<https://barcodesavers.io/information/barcode-acceptance-supplier-guidelines/>

Logistics, Shipping, and Hazmat

Ensure the safe and efficient transport of goods, including hazardous materials, by setting strict standards for packaging, labeling, and handling. Compliance with these rules protects people, the environment, and supply chain integrity throughout the shipping process.

International Safe Transit Association Packaging Testing Protocols

Many brands must follow:

- Drop tests
- Vibration tests
- Compression tests
- Climate/temperature tests

United Nations (UN) and U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Hazmat Packaging

If shipping hazardous materials:

- UN certification markings
- Structural integrity requirements
- Specific label icons and placement

Amazon Frustration Free Packaging (FFP)

For ecommerce compliance:

- Minimizing void fill
- Easy-to-open design
- Recyclability
- Protective thresholds for shipping without an overbox

Helpful Resources

<https://www.ista.org>

<https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/regulations/hazardous-materials/how-comply-federal-hazardous-materials-regulations>

<https://unece.org/transport/dangerous-goods>

<https://www.amazon-packaging.com/frustration-free-packaging>

Country- or Region-Specific Regulations (if selling worldwide)

Ensure that products meet the legal requirements and standards unique to each market where they are sold. Understanding and complying with these rules is essential for global businesses to avoid penalties and build trust with local consumers.

European Union (EU) Packaging & Packaging Waste Directive

- Limits packaging volume & weight
- Restrictions on heavy metals
- Material recycling requirements
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) fees

European Union (EU) Labeling Requirements

For cosmetics, food, electronics, toys, etc.:

- CE (Conformité Européene) mark
- Ingredients in EU format
- Multilingual requirements

Helpful Resources

https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/packaging-waste_en

<https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/content/labelling-and-packaging>

<https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/eu-labelingmarking-requirements>

https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/product-requirements/labels-markings/ce-marking/index_en.htm

https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/product-requirements/food-labelling/general-rules/index_en.htm

Industry-Specific Requirements

Ensure that packaging design complies with the unique standards and regulations of each sector, such as food safety, pharmaceuticals, or electronics. Meeting these tailored guidelines helps protect consumers, maintain product integrity, and avoid costly legal issues.

Depending on the product, the box might also need to comply with:

Product Type	Regulations
Cosmetics	FDA, EU Cosmetics Regulation, International Nomenclature of Cosmetic Ingredients (INCI) labeling
Food & Beverage	FDA, USDA, Nutrition Facts formatting, allergen laws
Electronics	Restriction of Hazardous Substances directive (RoHS), Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE), battery disposal icons, Underwriters Laboratories (UL) certification
Medications	FDA Drug Facts, tamper-evident packaging
Alcohol	Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) labeling & warnings
Cannabis	State-level labeling, child-resistant packaging

Helpful Resources

<https://www.nist.gov/pml/owm/packaging-and-labeling-requirements-faqs>

<https://www.epa.gov/facts-and-figures-about-materials-waste-and-recycling/containers-and-packaging-product-specific>

Want more?

There's a website.

CreateWithCompliance.com is your digital companion to the Creative Compliance notebook. It's an online hub where checklists come to life and compliance concepts are transformed into interactive lessons, real-world examples, and hands-on exercises. Designed for educators and students alike, the site reveals how accessibility, transparency, and ethics drive smarter, more inclusive advertising – proving that compliance isn't just a rule-book, it's a creative advantage.

www.createwithcompliance.com

Stay Creative, Confident & Compliant