



Chico State Sustainable Swag Guidelines

You're tabling at an event and want to attract passersby to your organization. People love free stuff, "swag," and of course, it can increase the number of visitors at your table. But if that swag will momentarily end up in a landfill, is it really a productive use of resources or responsibly representing your organization?

The promotional products industry [sold \\$23 billion dollars of swag in 2017 and was on an upward sales trend](#). Let's put that \$23 billion to work on products not destined for a trip to the landfill. These guidelines were created to help you choose effective swag and limit your negative environmental and social impact.

1. How can I fill a need for my audience?

On the CSU, Chico campus, students need #2 pencils, pens, scantrons, snacks, and caffeine. Providing students with these types of branded items will have a much more meaningful impact.

2. What is the life cycle and use of the swag relative to its cost and environmental footprint?

The more durable a swag item is, the more it will remind the user and others of your organization. Compare a cheap plastic bag that breaks after one use and will lead to pervasive plastic pollution to a sturdy, washable, cloth bag. While the sturdier bag may be more expensive, it does not contribute to an environmental issue and will lead to longer lasting visibility. Plus, it's useful to have!

3. Instead of single-use items, can you host a raffle or giveaway?

Raffles and giveaways attract attention and create ongoing engagement as people wait to see who the winner is. Instead of wasting money on single-use items, invest in a larger item. The items you give away should promote an environmentally or socially responsible behavior, like a bike!

4. Can the swag help improve the environment?

- Seed packs with a label from your organization on them
- Succulents or other plants in reused containers such as jars and cans
- Trees your audience can plant

5. Can you creatively engage your audience?

You may not need to give your audience anything physical at all but instead an experience.

- Invite your audience to vote for a nonprofit to receive the funds you would have spent on swag
- Set up a game (e.g. giant Jenga, cornhole, or hopscotch) with fun facts about your organization or an issue your organization addresses peppered throughout
- Educate your audience on an interesting topic or offer fun facts about your organization
- Have materials for a sustainability themed DIY activity, such as making natural [sunscreen](#) or other [sustainable crafts](#). Here are [more ideas](#).

6. Can the branded item(s) support a sustainable lifestyle?

- Bike lights, bells or helmets
- Reusable straws, utensils, or food storage containers
- Local, organic, low packaged snacks like fruit
- Low-flow shower heads or nozzles
- LED light bulbs

UC, Davis has an [incredibly comprehensive site with more information](#) about sustainable swag

**The next time you are considering swag options,
make sure it is sustainable, effective, and impactful!**