



# COPYWRITING PORTFOLIO

## BLOG ARTICLES



I love researching and writing blog articles.

Because as I'm helping your audience, I always get to learn a little something, too.

As a generalist writer, I enjoy writing on most topics. And translating complex subjects into plain English is a speciality!

I've written lots of articles over the years, but these are eight of my favourites – on subjects as diverse as vegan pet food, green roofs and loan consolidation.

Do you need fresh new content for your blog?

You can get in touch and tell me about your needs using the form on my [contact page](#).

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The links in these articles have been deactivated, but show where links to credible and supportive research were added.



## **CLIENT: Bother**

Bother is an ethical online store selling household essentials to consumers in the UK. Its range includes well-known brand names alongside sustainable, eco-friendly, and fair-trade grocery products. The company also specialises in products for health-conscious consumers and those with special dietary needs.

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### **ABOUT THIS ARTICLE**

Many of Bother's target customers are switching to more plant-based diets. And online search trends showed that people were asking if their pets could switch, too.

## **Can cats and dogs be vegan?**



Image by huoadg5888 from Pixabay

## **Is a vegan diet healthy for cats and dogs?**

Today, many of us are switching to plant-based diets and reducing our intake of animal products.

If you've made that switch for yourself, you may be wondering if your four-legged friend can do the same.

But can a completely vegan diet give your meat-eating pet the nutrition they need to stay healthy?

We've done the research to give you the answers you need.

## Cats and dogs need protein

Proteins provide your pet with the vital amino acids they need. And while we mainly think of proteins coming from animal products, they can also come from plant-based sources such as whole grains, beans, corn and soy.

The question is, can cats and dogs get enough of the nutrients they need purely from plants?

### Cats are obligate carnivores

Biologically, cats are obligate carnivores, which means they have to eat meat. Their digestive systems and metabolisms aren't designed for plant material and some cats can't tolerate it at all.

Many of the essential nutrients cats need are only found in animal proteins. One of these nutrients is taurine, an amino acid cats can only get from meat and fish.

Without these essential nutrients, a cat's health would deteriorate quickly. Taurine deficiency can cause blindness, heart disease, a compromised immune system and eventual death.

Vegan cat food is available, but it has to have these vital proteins and nutrients added artificially.

### Dogs are omnivorous

Dogs are members of the order *Carnivora*, a group of mammals that primarily eat flesh.

However, they're actually omnivores and can eat a mixture of meat and plant proteins. In fact, 20-30% of a balanced diet for dogs should come from plants.

For dogs, a typical diet has around 20-35% protein. Most complete dog foods contain a mixture of meat, grain and vegetable proteins.

The protein in a dog's diet can come from meat, but it doesn't have to. So, with the right diet and nutrients, it's possible for a dog to be vegan.

## Is vegan dog food nutritious enough?

A typical dog's diet should contain around 40% carbohydrates, 30% proteins, 27% vegetables and 3% oils.

The diet should also contain taurine, L-carnitine, iron, calcium, iodine, vitamins E, B12 and D – many of which come from meat. If you're using a vegan meat substitute, like soy protein, it will need to be fortified with these essential vitamins and minerals.

Buying a [complete vegan dog food](#) may be easier, as this will include all the vitamin and mineral supplements your dog needs.

The University of Vienna conducted a 6-month study of 20 dogs on a fortified vegan dog food plan. They found that the dogs remained healthy, with no negative impact.

## How to switch to vegan dog food

As with any change of food, start by mixing the vegan food into your dog's regular food. Keep increasing the proportions of vegan dog food until there is no meat left.

Following the switch, keep a close eye on your dog to ensure the new diet agrees with them. Particularly, check for any skin or gastrointestinal problems.

## If the vegan dog food causes problems

Vets recommend that if your dog isn't thriving on its new vegan dog food, you should do the right thing and return to a meat-based diet.

## Choosing more eco-friendly pet food

If you've ruled out a vegan diet for your pet, but still want an eco-friendly alternative, there are other options that are naturally healthy and still kind to the environment.

Some of the things you can look for include:

- Fresh, natural and nutritious ingredients
- Proper meat and fish that's easier to digest
- Organic foods made without harmful chemicals
- Fish from sustainable fisheries
- Eco and recyclable packaging.

Check out our fabulous [Lily's Kitchen](#) range for a mix of wet and dry pet food with organic options and eco credentials.



## CLIENT: Roof Maker

Roof Maker is a Leicester-based company specialising in the design and production of world-class rooflights and roof lanterns.

### ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

Green roofs are growing in popularity as a way to introduce more biodiversity into urban areas. Roof Maker's customers had been asking about the roofs and if they could include a rooflight, too.

## Is a green roof suitable for a rooflight?

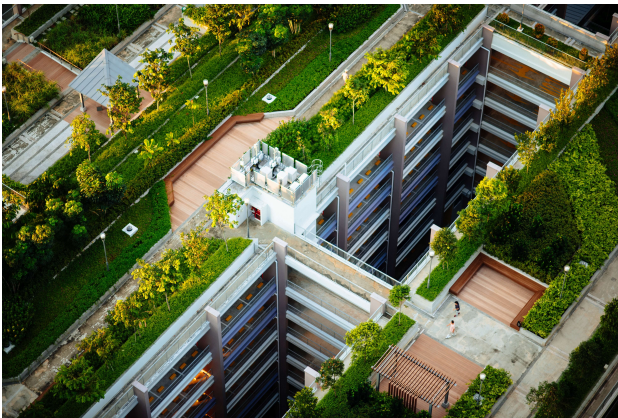


Image by Chuttersnap at Unsplash

We all want to do our bit for the environment. And it's well-documented that attracting more bees and insects gives nature a boost and is good for our ecosystem.

One way to do this is by installing a green roof on your flat roof. But what if you also want a rooflight? Can you have both? And how much maintenance will they need?

In this post we'll answer those questions and more. But first, what is a green roof and why should you consider having one?

## What is a green roof?

A green roof — also known as a living roof — is a roof that is planted with greenery.

Practically any building can have a green roof, including homes, shops, offices and even garden sheds. And they can be installed on any kind of roof, whether it's flat or has a steep pitch.

# The four types of green roof

If you're thinking of installing a living roof, there are four main types to choose from. The more elaborate the roof you choose, the higher the cost will be.

## Extensive green roof (sedum roof)

These roofs are shallow and lightweight. They're usually planted with sedum, which requires very little maintenance and makes them popular with homeowners.

## Intensive green roof

Intensive roofs are more like small gardens. They can be planted with a wider variety of plants, including bushes and small trees. These roofs need a thicker layer of planting material, which makes them deeper and heavier than an extensive roof. They also need a lot more maintenance.

## Semi-intensive green roof

A semi-intensive green roof sits somewhere between the extensive and intensive roofs. It's a little deeper than an extensive roof and can support a wider variety of plants.

## Biodiverse green roof

The main purpose of these roofs is to promote biodiversity. These roofs often include recycled materials and are built specifically to encourage more wildlife.

# Green roofs pros and cons

## Benefits of a green roof

The benefits of a green roof are many. Here are some of the main ones.

### Visually appealing

A living roof is a beautiful addition to any building. They allow us to create more green spaces in our urban areas and in our residential and industrial developments.

### Long-lasting

The natural materials used to create the roof are weather-resistant and durable.

In Germany, where green roofs are more common, they've been found to last [three times longer](#) than a traditional roof when properly installed and maintained.

With traditional asphalt roofs lasting [20 years on average](#), this means a green roof could last for 60 years or even longer.

## **Fire-resistant**

Because of the moisture it contains, a green roof is highly resistant to fire.

## **A defence against flooding**

Green roofs help to absorb rainwater, filter it and delay its release into the sewage system. This means that drains are not overwhelmed and the risk of flooding is reduced.

## **An air purifier**

The plants in a green roof filter pollutants and toxins from the air and convert carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into oxygen.

## **A temperature regulator**

Plants both absorb and reflect heat from the sun. In a green roof they can help to keep your home warmer during winter and cooler during the summer.

## **A noise insulator**

A green roof can provide [sound insulation up to 8dB](#). To put that into context, a 10dB reduction in outside noise would make your home around 50% quieter.

## **A natural living habitat for wildlife**

Green roofs promote biodiversity by providing green spaces where wildlife, like bees and other insects, can thrive.

## **Disadvantages of a green roof**

There are also some disadvantages of a green roof.

### **Increased weight**

A green roof weighs heavier than a traditional roof, which means some roofs will need additional structural support. This will depend on the type of roof you have and the supports already in place.

### **More expensive**

They're more expensive than a traditional roof. Part of the cost involves reinforcing the roof supports so they can hold the extra weight.

### **Needs ongoing maintenance**

The greater the variety of plants it has, the more maintenance a green roof is likely to need. Some roofs will need the same amount of maintenance as a regular landscaped garden.



## Green roof construction

A green roof comprises several layers, which all have different functions.

At the bottom are the structural supports, which are topped with a roofing membrane. On top of that are the membrane protection, insulation and root barriers.

The central layers deal with storing/draining water and aerating the planting material.

On the top is a layer of planting material, such as soil, into which the greenery is planted.

## Green roofs and rooflights

### Can you install a green roof where there's a rooflight?

Yes. A standard flat roof can easily be converted to a living roof, providing the guidance is followed. And if the roof contains a rooflight, there's guidance for installing the green roof around it.

To do this successfully, you need to keep a sufficient gap between the edges of the rooflight and the vegetation planted on the roof.

### Can you install a rooflight in a green roof?

Yes. If you have a green roof, you can install a rooflight in it by following the guidance provided.

There's some additional work in this scenario, because you'll have to remove a section of the living roof *and* the base roof underneath it.

### What's the best rooflight to have on a green roof?

Green roofs are typically installed on flat roofs or roofs with a small incline. With this in mind, Roof Maker would recommend the [Fixed Flat Rooflight](#) – or the [Opening Flat Rooflight](#) if you want your rooflight to open.

### Does a rooflight on a green roof need more maintenance?

The rooflight itself won't need more maintenance. All Roof Maker rooflights have easy clean glass as standard, which reduces the need for manual cleaning. The coating means bird droppings and dirt are broken down by the sun and washed away naturally by the rain.

However, you will need to make sure the green roof is properly maintained, including keeping the recommended gap between the plants and the rooflight.



## What are the benefits of having a rooflight on a green roof?

The main benefit of any rooflight is to let more light into the property. On a green roof, you may also be able to see more birds and insects outside.

## Could birds and wildlife damage the rooflight?

You might be wondering if encouraging more wildlife onto your roof could put your rooflight at risk of damage.

All Roof Maker rooflights are finished with a marine-grade powder coating that's tough and long-lasting. The coating is highly resistant to damage from adverse weather conditions, birds and other wildlife.

## Thinking about a rooflight for a green roof?

Roof Maker rooflights are the ideal addition to a green roof.

They offer:

- Marine-grade powder coating for exceptional durability
- Easy-clean glass to keep dirt and bird droppings at bay
- Minimal frames to maximise your viewing window and fill your room with natural light.

Maybe you're considering a rooflight for an existing green roof. Or maybe you're thinking of getting a green roof and a rooflight installed together.

Either way, talking to our experts will help you make the right decisions to get the beautiful result you're looking for.

To discuss your needs, call us on 0116 497 1272 or email [sales@roof-maker.co.uk](mailto:sales@roof-maker.co.uk).



## CLIENT: Lotuly

Lotuly is a UK-based language translation bureau using translators based all over the world. The company specialises in human translations, done without the aid of Ai.

## ARTICLE

In social media posts, Lotuly often expresses concerns about our reliance on machine translators, like Google Translate. This article addresses those concerns in more detail and explains why machine translators might never replace a human.

# Will machine translators ever replace humans?



Image by Michal Beitz from Pixabay

## An embarrassing translation error

It was 2018 and Netta Barzilai had just won the Eurovision Song Contest.

It was Israel's first Eurovision victory in 20 years and Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, tweeted his congratulations in Hebrew.

***“Netta, at kapparah amitit.”***

He used the word ‘kapparah’, which is a slang term of endearment — and the sentence should have translated into English as *“Netta, you are a real darling.”* But it didn't.

Instead, the English-speaking world read his tweet as *“Netta, you are a real cow.”*

The embarrassing error was made by Twitter's integrated translation tool, which is automated by Microsoft Bing.

## The rise of on-demand translations

A human translator would never have made a mistake like that.

But, unfortunately, for any platform that offers translations on demand, machine translation is the only viable option.

For example, [according to a poll by The British Council](#), translation apps, like Google Translate have become a go-to for young British travellers visiting foreign countries. More than 60% of 16-34-year-olds said they'd used their smartphone to understand the local language.

And 21% of those who'd used their smartphone had reported inaccurate translations, leading to misunderstandings.

But, while young people on holiday might be able to laugh off a mistake, it's a different story for companies wanting to do business.

We previously posted about [16 Unfortunate translation failures](#) that were not only incredibly embarrassing, but cost companies huge amounts of money.

## Why machine translations fail

There are a number of reasons why a machine's translations might be inaccurate. Here are some of them.

### Words can have more than one meaning

Unlike humans, machines can't recognise context. So if a word has more than one meaning, the machine translator will go for the most obvious one rather than the correct one.

### Character strings can take on new meanings

In Chinese language, an individual character, used alone, can have one meaning. But that same character can have an entirely different meaning when it's used together with another character. Sports brand, Nike, found this to its cost.

Nike launched a pair of trainers to commemorate the 2016 Chinese New Year, with a Chinese character embroidered on each heel.

The left heel had the character 'fa', which means 'getting rich'. The right heel had the character 'fu', which means 'fortune arrives'. But read side by side, the two characters formed the new phrase 'Get fat'.

A human translator, or native Chinese speaker, would have been aware of this problem, but Nike didn't consult either.

## Language is full of nuances

There are lots of subtleties and cultural elements to language, like slang, evolved meanings, disguised insults, regional variations and idioms.

As humans, we're learning these things as soon as we learn to speak and read. But we can never expect machines to master such complexities.

## Machines run on formulae

Human translators can do language gymnastics. They're experts at bending and breaking certain rules to make sure the words carry the same meaning from one language to another. A machine will only ever follow the rules it's programmed with.

## Machines can't read the tone

The tone refers to the way the words are delivered. Maybe they're supposed to be amusing, or have a poetic style. Perhaps they're designed to shock, or motivate the audience to take action.

A machine performing a flat translation won't pick up these style cues and the meaning of the message will be lost.

## Will machines replace human translators?

Tech companies are always telling us AI is going to replace human translators. And there's no doubt the technology is improving.

But the tech companies are overselling what their machines can actually do – and what they might be capable of in the future.

As sophisticated as their machines get, they will always have to be programmed and follow predetermined formulae, rather than thinking critically and rationally.

And though they might be able to translate basic sentences and formulaic documents quickly, we should be wary of trusting them completely without some human scrutiny.

Where documents and projects are more complex, the style, tone, meaning and intent are vital. And for now, machines simply can't compete with human knowledge and understanding.

They may never be able to learn and apply, through programming, what a human has learned in their lifetime. Or make a true human connection with real people.

## Do you need human translations?

Lotus never uses machines to do a human's job. The potential for error is just too great – and you have a reputation to protect.

Instead, we work with experienced, native-speaking translators and writers all over the world. Skilled translators who understand exactly what you want to say and give you the right words to say it.

So if you need reliable translations you can trust, please visit our home page to get an [instant translation quote](#), or [contact us](#) to discuss your specific needs with a real person.

## **Are you a translator?**

If you're an experienced translator and would like the chance to work with a progressive, ethical and environmentally conscious company, Lotuly would love to hear from you.

[Tell us about yourself and upload your CV.](#)



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## CLIENT: Matt Glover Photography

Matt Glover is a Leicester-based photographer. He photographs a mix of weddings, families and businesses, but specialises in personal branding photography for business owners.

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### ARTICLE

Matt loves outdoor photography and finds it gets the best out of his subjects, especially children. In this article, he wanted to explain why and how outdoor works best.

## 10 Good reasons to take your family photoshoot outdoors



Image by Amanda McConnell from Pixabay

## Studio photography isn't for everyone

You can spend a long time in a studio, trying to pose the perfect family shot.

Eventually, the kids will get tired, grumpy and not want to cooperate. And they might start crying, fighting with each other or having tantrums, which can make things even more difficult.

But taking your photoshoot outdoors can have lots of great benefits – for your family and your photographs.

If you're undecided, here are 10 reasons why outdoor family photoshoots can be better than a studio session.

# 10 Good reasons to photograph families outdoors

## 1. It's healthier than the studio

Spending time outdoors is good for us – it's therapeutic and benefits our mental health. It gives us a break from technology and gets us out in the fresh air.

It's especially good for the kids, who can be as free, noisy and playful as they want to be. They're allowed to run around, scream, laugh and let themselves go. This isn't usually possible when you're confined to a studio.

## 2. You can choose the location

There are some lovely beauty spots to choose from and you may have one close to where you live. It might be somewhere that's special to you, where you like to go for walks as a family.

Familiarity and routine are really important for some children and will help them be more calm and receptive to having their pictures taken.

## 3. The photographs are more natural

Studio photography is posed, so it's always forced to some degree. Being outside allows everyone to just be themselves and behave as they normally do.

Some photographs can be taken more 'in the moment' – shooting scenes and actions as they happen naturally, rather than trying to force them. This helps to capture all the fun and the different personalities.

## 4. The environment is natural, too

The studio environment is fake with the photography taking place in front of a screen. But outdoors your photography could be taken against the backdrop of a beautiful, natural landscape.

There's green grass, blue sky, hills, flowers and trees. There are things to interact with too – like logs to balance on, rocks to climb and walls to sit on.

And rather than harsh artificial light, you have natural sunlight and shade.

## 5. You can bring your own props

Your kids can bring their favourite toys. Not just small toys to pacify them, but fun, active toys, like scooters, bicycles and roller skates.

You could even bring a picnic if that's something you enjoy doing as a family.



## 6. It's not focused on everyone at once

In a studio family portrait, you need everyone in shot at the same time. All looking perfect and all smiling together. But this isn't always easy, especially if you have a larger family.

Photographing outside means we can focus on different family groupings as well as whole group shots. And if one child gets overwhelmed, they can go for a run around while we photograph the others.

## 7. You can bring your dog

Your dog may be part of your family, but won't be allowed in most studios.

If we photograph outdoors, your dog can come too and be involved in the shoot – so it feels like a proper family portrait.

## 8. The colours and seasons

Outside, you have the benefit of different colours and seasons. This gives you so much more potential for your family photoshoot.

You could choose a backdrop featuring autumn shades, spring hues or the vibrant colours of summer. Or wear bright hats and scarves to brighten up a more muted winter's day.

## 9. Genuine emotions

You can always tell a forced smile. But outside, those smiles will be genuine – the laughs too. And kids laugh a lot when they're free to mess about and enjoy themselves!

## 10. It will be a memory of a family day out

Unlike being stuck in a studio, family days out are fun and everyone is relaxed. And, because everyone is enjoying themselves, it's easier to get the whole family together for the group shots.

This is a much better scenario for getting some amazing family photos – and you'll have some lovely memories of a fun day too.

## Family photography, Leicester

### Need a fun photographer for your outdoor family photoshoot?

I'm Matt Glover, a professional photographer who specialises in family photography and outdoor family photoshoots.

If you want to take your family photoshoot outside – and have a lot of fun in the process – take a look at [my portfolio](#) or [get in touch](#).



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## CLIENT: Bother

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### ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

This article was written during the Covid-19 lockdowns when most people were working from home and the cafés were closed. Many people were missing their barista coffee, but especially those using alternative plant-based milks.

## How to create the barista experience at home with oat milk



Image by Chevron Photography at Pexels

## Missing your barista coffee?

With more of us spending more time at home, many of us have been missing our favourite barista coffee.

That sublime mix of strong perky coffee and hot sweet milk. Foamed to perfection for a rather splendid milk moustache!

It's been especially hard on those of us who can't or don't consume dairy products. Because recreating barista-style coffee with non-dairy milk has been... challenging.

## What is the ideal barista milk?

For the perfect foam, you need a light, creamy milk that froths well. This is why most barista coffees are made with whole milk as standard.

Milk is a suspension of fat, protein and carbohydrate. When the barista adds steam, the milk froths with lots of tiny bubbles. This creates a stiff, lightweight foam that holds its shape and is ideal for making latte art.

Whole milk works best because its higher fat content makes the most stable foam.

## Why doesn't plant-based milk work so well?

For those of us using dairy-free milk, there's a range of plant-based alternatives including soya, oat, rice and nut milks.

The reason these plant-based milks are less successful in the hands of a non-barista is down to their make-up. And we don't mean their mascara!

Dairy-free alternatives are basically a suspension of the liquidised ingredient — soya, oats, rice or nuts — in water.

Because their chemical make-up is different to animal milk, they don't froth. And if you've ever used them in coffee, which is naturally acidic, you've probably found they curdled, too.

## What's the best milk alternative for coffee?

If you're using non-dairy milk in your coffee, it's important to use a special barista blend. These milks have added stabilisers to regulate their consistency. The stabilisers stop the milk from reacting with the coffee, so it doesn't curdle.

One such blend is Oatly Barista, which, as the name suggests, is an oat milk. The milk has a little rapeseed oil added, which gives it a creamier texture. And it froths, too — but more on that later.

## What makes oat milk so good?

Oat milk is one of the healthiest plant-based milks. It's rich in unsaturated fats — and nutritious, with calcium and vitamins. The milk is made from liquid oats, so it has a little natural sweetness and isn't too heavy.

Oatly Barista is a non-chilled product, which can be stored in the cupboard until you open it. The milk has a pleasant neutral flavour and it isn't grainy or chalky like some plant-based milks can be.

It heats and froths beautifully for the full barista experience, but can also be used straight from the carton, like regular milk.

## How do you froth Oatly Barista?

You can froth Oatly Barista in the same way you would froth regular milk.

Heat as much as you need — in the microwave or on the hob — and use a frothing wand or manual frother to create the foam.

What's that? You don't have a frother?

Well, thankfully, all is not lost. Pour the unheated milk into a large jar and screw the lid on tight. Then shake it like you mean it for 30 to 60 seconds, or until you see the froth has formed. Once frothed, the milk can be heated in the microwave. Just remember to use a microwave-safe container for this bit.

## Creating the latte art

It wouldn't be a true barista experience without the final flourish. To achieve this, you ideally need your warmed milk in a pouring jug. Hold it about 5cm above your cup and pour it so the thin milk under the foam goes into the coffee first.

Then you're ready to create your design.

For this part, move the milk jug close to the top of your coffee and tilt the cup slightly towards you. You can then start your design by pouring the foam, a little at a time into the middle of the cup. If you need a demonstration, there are videos online that will show you exactly how to do this.

And there you have it! Your perfect barista coffee, created at home using oat milk.

## Can't wait to try it?

If you're based in the UK, you can order [Oatly Barista Edition](#) direct from us.

We also sell a variety of ground coffees — and Nespresso-compatible capsules, which are both fair trade and fully compostable. You can see our [full coffee range here](#).



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## CLIENT: Roof Maker

Roof Maker is a Leicester-based company specialising in the design and production of world-class rooflights and roof lanterns.

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### ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

The company creates a lot of content about rooflights, but they also like to inspire their readers with ideas for their interior spaces. In these articles, natural light is always a key feature.

## Open-plan kitchen diner ideas to inspire you



Image by Foto Miki on Flickr, under Public Domain licence

## The trend for informal living

Traditionally, our homes had a more formal layout, with separate kitchens, dining rooms and living rooms. But in recent years, this has changed and these rooms are increasingly merging into more open-plan arrangements.

It's all part of a new trend for a more informal and sociable style of living.

Modern houses are now being built to include more open-plan living spaces. And traditional homes are being remodelled to include them, too.

One of the most desirable open-plan spaces in a modern family home is the open-plan kitchen diner.

## The open-plan kitchen diner

The open-plan kitchen diner is an informal, multifunctional and social space where people can come together.

It's a space where children can do homework at the dining room table, while their parents prepare a meal. Where dinner party hosts and guests can socialise together while the food is cooking. And where parties can happen with all the guests in the same room.

It's a bright space, filled with natural light. A healthier, happier heart of the home and a room for people to enjoy spending time in.

If you're considering a space like this for your home, this post is full of open-plan kitchen diner ideas to help you plan and decorate your space.

## Open-plan kitchen diner extension

If you've decided to create an open-plan kitchen diner in your home, you'll need to think carefully about how you'll be using the space and create a layout that works well for you and your family.

Many open-plan kitchen diners are created by building a single-storey extension on the back of the house.

An extension like this creates extra space on the ground floor of your property and has its own roof, which can be used to accommodate skylights. With the right windows and doors, you could also enjoy panoramic views of your garden.

## Roofing options for your extension

The most common options are a flat roof extension or a pitched roof extension.

Flat roofs are a popular and more affordable option. They're quicker to construct and require fewer materials than a pitched roof. But they're also more prone to weather damage, need [regular maintenance](#) and don't last quite so long.

Pitched roofs cost more, but they're more durable, more weather resistant and better at draining surface water. With a pitched roof, you also have the benefit of a vaulted ceiling, giving you additional height and light inside your extension.

## Skylights for kitchens

The dream open-plan kitchen diners you see on Pinterest and Instagram are bright welcoming spaces, flooded with natural light. This abundant light comes from skylights.

## How to choose skylights for kitchens

When choosing skylights for kitchens, there are a few things to consider.

In a kitchen, it's a good idea to have skylights that open. These skylights provide ventilation and help to expel steam and cooking smells from your room.

The kitchen diner is a room you'll want to spend time in, so triple-glazed skylights are often advisable. Triple-glazing gives the best heat insulation, which will help to maintain a comfortable temperature in your extension all year round.

If your room is south-facing, consider glass coatings that reduce solar gain. This will prevent an unpleasant build-up of heat in direct sun.

To create a consistent colour scheme, look for skylights that are available in a range of colours. This will allow you to colour-coordinate your skylights with the windows and doors you've chosen.

With any skylight, you'll want to make sure you're getting as much light as possible coming into your room. The best skylights for light transmission have maximal glass and a slim unobtrusive frame.

[Roof Maker's skylight range](#) can offer you all of the above.

## Open-plan kitchen diner layout

The layout of your kitchen diner will depend on the orientation of your space.

### Long and narrow space

If your space is long and narrow, a galley kitchen at one end of the room might be the best option. The dining area could occupy the space in the middle and there could be room for some lounge seating at the other end.

In terms of skylights, you could have one above each separate area. For example, an opening skylight above the kitchen and fixed ones for the dining area and/or lounge.

If you're having a flat roof, you could also consider a [modular arrangement](#) that spans the whole area.

### Square space

In a square space, you could have the popular kitchen layout with the cupboards and appliances along the back wall, a kitchen island in front and your dining table beyond that in the middle of the room.

A square space has more of a focal point on the ceiling, so you could create a feature skylight with a [roof lantern](#). Roof lanterns have a three-dimensional shape, with angled glass that draws in light from all directions.



## Things to consider

Whatever your layout, you need to think about how people will move through the space, from one area to another. Make sure it flows easily and naturally with no tight walkways or awkward corners.

In a multifunctional open-plan space, you'll have different zones for different functions. These zones can be separated using what's called a 'broken plan' layout. The idea of a broken plan is to create distinct sections while maintaining a sense of unity and without losing any light. This is easier when you have skylights, because the light is coming in from above.

A broken plan uses different techniques to designate the different zones. This might be structural, with half walls, construction materials and variable floor heights. Or it could be through clever use of decoration, colours, shapes and furniture positioning.

Another popular feature is a bi-folding door, which opens fully into the garden, giving you the option to unify your indoor and outdoor spaces.

## Planning your dream kitchen diner

Your ideal kitchen should be practical and functional with plenty of storage space. But it should also be a room you'll enjoy spending time in.

## Practicality and function

### Flooring

Consider the flooring – especially in high-traffic areas like the kitchen. It should be hard-wearing, non-slip and easy to keep clean.

You can choose from a range of options including concrete, tiles, hardwood, laminate, stone and granite. Sealed floors are the most water-resistant and best for mopping.

### Seating

The room could include a number of seating options, from stools at the kitchen island/ breakfast bar, to dining room chairs – and, possibly, lounge seating elsewhere in the space.

### Food preparation space

Decide how much space you'll need for food preparation and, if you have the space, whether a second sink might be handy.

Placing sinks and worktops in front of windows will give you a view while you're working. And installing an opening skylight directly above the kitchen will give you plenty of natural light and ventilation.

## Appliances and electrics

Think about your smaller worktop appliances and where they'll fit into the new scheme. If you're keeping them on the worktop, you'll need well-placed electric sockets to power them.

You might also think about USB sockets for charging your gadgets.

## Storage

If you're going for a minimal look, you'll need large cupboards to store your appliances and keep them out of the way. One option is to have a secret breakfast cupboard where your coffee machine, kettle and toaster are all accessible, but hidden away.

Another option could be to have a pantry. This walk-in shelved cupboard is the perfect concealed space for storing food, pots, pans and other awkward/occasional items.

## Space-saving ideas

If you're short on space, you'll probably be looking for some more compact features for your space.

Built-in appliances can look neater and more unified than free-standing ones — especially in a smaller kitchen.

Free-standing dining chairs can take up a lot of space. For a more compact alternative, look at fixed banquette seating or benches that slide fully under the table.

If you have benches, you could also push the dining table against a wall while it's not in use to create more usable floor space.

## Kitchen diner colours and schemes

When you've planned your layout, you can choose the colours and schemes for your space.

Ideally, go for a classic style that won't look dated in a few years. Or choose a style you can update yourself, for example, by painting or treating the cupboard doors.

## Choosing your style

If you don't already have a style in mind, you might be looking for some ideas to inspire you.

## Construction materials

Your style could follow the construction of your extension. Exposed brick and steelwork might inspire a more industrial style. While exposed stone and timber could give a country house aesthetic.

## Cabinetry and furnishings

Natural materials, like wood, clay and wicker, create an organic and calming space. While reflective materials like metal accents, shiny cupboard doors and polished floors help disperse the light coming in and brighten up the space.

If you want a more sustainable and eco-friendly design, look for kitchens made from recycled and reclaimed materials. Or give second-hand kitchen units a new lease of life.

## Colours and lighting

With skylights maximising the natural light coming into your space, you can embrace trends for darker kitchen units and colour schemes. Dark greys, rich greens and navy blues have all been popular choices in recent years.

After dark, think about artificial lighting schemes that will complement the space. Dimmable LEDs go from bright lights you can work under, to soft lights you can relax and entertain in. Long pendant lights can create a more intimate feel in kitchens with high ceilings.

## Are you looking for kitchen skylight ideas?

Roof Maker's [skylight range](#) combines stunning minimalist design with expert craftsmanship and all the practical features you need.

Our range offers:

- A selection of standard and custom sizes
- Skylights with a hinged opening for ventilation
- Slimline frames to allow maximal light transmission
- Triple-glazing for the best possible heat insulation
- A choice of RAL colours to complement your existing exterior scheme
- Easy clean coating as standard
- A choice of tints and coatings to reduce glare and limit solar gain.

### Skylights for kitchens in a pitched roof extension

If your extension has a pitched roof, take a look at our [Luxlite](#) pitched rooflight.

### Skylights for kitchens in a flat roof extension

If your extension has a flat roof, you have a number of skylight options.

#### Fixed flat skylights

Roof Maker's [fixed flat skylights](#) are non-opening and could be perfect for spaces set away from the kitchen area.

## Flat hinged-opening skylights

Our [hinged-opening](#) skylights provide both light and ventilation, which makes them an ideal choice to be positioned above the kitchen.

## Slimline roof lantern

The [slimline roof lantern](#) is a stunning three-dimensional skylight that will add height and light to your space.

It's also possible to order the slimline roof lantern with an opening vent for ventilation.

We have another article on our [skylight options for flat roofs](#) if you'd like to find out more.

## Get in touch

If you need expert advice, or a quotation, call the team on 0116 497 1256 or email [sales@roof-maker.co.uk](mailto:sales@roof-maker.co.uk) and we'll be happy to help.



## CLIENT: Clockwise Credit Union

Clockwise is a Midlands-based not-for-profit credit union providing savings accounts and loans. Its members are mainly low-income families with limited knowledge of financial services, so the content needed to be broken down into plain English.

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### ARTICLE

Clockwise work with a lot of people who might benefit from consolidating their loans, but don't understand the terminology or process. This article answers everything.

## Our complete guide to consolidating your loans



Image by Republica from Pixabay

### You're managing multiple loans

Your loans have all been taken out at different times, from different lenders. And each one has a different APR.

You're gradually paying them off, by making regular payments to each of your lenders.

But because the loans are all in different places, with payments due at different times, managing them all can be stressful.

And it's harder to keep track of what you still owe and over what period of time.

This is where consolidating your loans could help you.

In this guide, we'll explain what loan consolidation is and how it works. And we'll give you the information to help you decide if it could be right for you.

## What is loan consolidation?

When you consolidate your loans, you take out one loan to pay off all your others.

So rather than making several small loan repayments to several different lenders, you repay one larger amount to one single lender.

Combining all your loans into one lump sum, with one clear pay-off date, makes it easier to manage your debt and make your repayments.

## How does loan consolidation work?

Let's say you've taken out three different loans and you want to consolidate them into one easy repayment.

First, you need to work out how much you still have to pay on each loan. The total will be the amount you need to apply for when you take out your consolidation loan.

If your loan is approved, you'll use the money to pay off each of your existing loans.

You'll then be left with just your consolidation loan to be repaid.

## How much could I borrow?

On an unsecured loan, the amount you can borrow will depend on your credit score.

You can find out your credit score for free at [Experian](#).

It's important to know your credit score and borrowing limit before you apply for a consolidation loan. Because, if you apply for a loan and it's rejected, this could harm your score.

## What if I have a low credit score?

If you have a low credit score, you'll have more success applying for a secured loan.

A secured loan uses a privately owned asset – like your house, for example, as collateral. This gives the lender some assurance that you can repay what you borrow.

Taking out a secured loan can be risky. There's a chance you could lose your asset if you don't keep up the repayments.

## Are consolidation loans worth it?

Consolidating your loans makes sense if:

- You have several high interest loans
- You'll be paying back your loans for more than a year
- Your credit score has improved since you took your loans out

- You qualify for a low interest rate, based on your credit score
- You have the money to cover the repayments.

There are a number of benefits and disadvantages you should be aware of, so here's a summary of those.

## The benefits of a consolidation loan

- **It makes things simpler**  
It's one loan, in one place, with one APR and one regular repayment amount. This makes it easier to keep track of your finances and budget.
- **It could save you money**  
If you take out a consolidation loan with a lower interest rate than you were paying before, it could save you money over the lifetime of the loan.
- **It could reduce your regular payment**  
When you consolidate your loans, it's likely that your one regular repayment will be less than you were paying before. This is because the new loan will be paid back over a longer term. If your repayments are less, you'll have more money in your household budget.
- **It could help you pay off your debt quicker**  
If you don't need the extra money in your household budget, you could use it to pay off the consolidation loan quicker.
- **It could improve your credit score in the long term**  
Applying for a new loan could temporarily reduce your credit score, but this is a short-term issue. In the long term, handling your debt responsibly, making consistent repayments and paying off the loan in full can all help to increase your score.

## The disadvantages of a consolidation loan

- **There could be added costs**  
When you take out a new loan, there could be origination fees and other costs to take into account.
- **Your interest rate could be higher**  
If you don't qualify for a lower rate of interest, you could end up paying more interest on your consolidation loan than you were on your separate loans.
- **You could pay more interest**  
Even if your new loan has a reduced interest rate, you could end up paying more interest if the loan is taken out over a longer period of time.
- **It won't stop you getting into more debt**  
A consolidation loan is not a fix for bad financial management. And it could even make things worse by making it seem like you have more money than you actually have.

If your existing debts have been caused by bad habits and overspending, you need to address these problems to stop you getting into further debt.



# How to choose a consolidation loan

If you've decided that a consolidation loan is right for you, you might be wondering where to get one and how to choose a good one.

In this section, we'll explore the options and explain some of the terms you need to understand.

## What to look for in a consolidation loan?

When looking at consolidation loans, there are three main things you need to look at:

- **The APR**  
The higher the APR, the higher the cost of the loan over its lifetime.
- **The total amount payable**  
This is the total amount you'll need to pay back over the lifetime of the loan. The amount includes fees and interest.
- **Your eligibility rating**  
This shows you how likely, or unlikely, you are to be accepted for a loan. It helps to know this upfront, because if you apply for a loan and it's declined, this could affect your credit score.

## What's the difference between the interest rate and APR?

A personal loan has both an interest rate and an APR (Annual Percentage Rate). These are related, but there are differences between them.

### What's the interest rate on a personal loan?

The interest rate is the amount you pay for borrowing the money. This will be a percentage of your loan amount.

The interest rate on a personal loan is usually fixed for the term of the loan, but you should always check this first.

### What's the APR on a personal loan?

When you take out a personal loan, your lender will typically add upfront charges known as origination fees. The fees are usually around 2-5% of your loan amount.

The APR is a combination of these fees and your interest rate.

If your existing loans are payday loans, according to the FCA, they'll have an [average APR of around 1,250%](#).

The APR on a consolidation loan is typically much lower.

## What are the different types of APR?

**Guaranteed APR** is the guaranteed rate of interest you'll pay if you take out the loan, including fees.

**Representative APR** is not guaranteed, but is an advertised rate which 51% of successful applicants are given.

**Fixed APR** will remain the same for the whole of the loan term.

**Variable APR** is attached to the index rate and may go up or down.

## Where to find lenders

You could start by looking on comparison sites — like [Compare the Market](#), for example. But the high profile lenders listed here aren't the only option.

You could also look at credit unions.

## What is a credit union?

A credit union is a not-for-profit community finance organisation that enables its members to save and/or borrow money.

Any profits the credit union makes goes towards improving its services and rewarding its members.

Members of a credit union belong to the same community. For example, they might live in the same area, work for the same organisation or belong to the same church.

## What are the advantages of borrowing from a credit union?

- A credit union provides loans at low rates
- Most credit unions offer loan repayment terms up to 10 years on unsecured loans and up to 35 years on a secured loan
- Repayments can include direct payments from your bank, employer or benefits, so you never accidentally miss a payment
- In England, Scotland and Wales, the interest that a credit union can charge is capped at 3% a month, or 42.6% a year
- There are no hidden charges and no penalties if you want to repay the loan early
- Because credit unions are not run for profit, they can offer you better support, taking the time to get to know you and offering solutions that meet your needs
- Credit unions encourage saving as well as borrowing, which could help you avoid problems with debt in the future

## How to apply for a loan from a credit union

If don't already belong to a credit union, you'll need to find one in your community. [Find Your Credit Union](#) is a good place to start.

Before you can apply for a loan, you may need to have been a member for a certain period of time or have built up savings in one of their savings accounts.

## Borrowing from Clockwise Credit Union

If you're based in Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Coventry or Warwickshire, you could apply to become a member of Clockwise Credit Union.

We offer loans from £100 to £15,000, subject to status. And we'll let you know if your loan has been approved within one working day.

Our repayment terms are flexible, allowing you to make weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments. You can pay by debit card, standing order or directly from your benefits.

While you're repaying your loan, we'll encourage you to save, too. And we'll even reward you for doing so.

Does that sound good?

If you'd like to find out more, [visit our website](#) or call the team on 0330 1755 792 (9.30am to 4.00pm, Monday to Friday).



## CLIENT: Terry O'Brien Careers

Terry O'Brien is a qualified HR professional and certified career and leadership coach. He specialises in helping people get clarity in their career so they can achieve success and high performance.

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### ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

Terry is a strong advocate of working to your unique strengths in a job that makes you feel inspired and energised. It's what he advises as a career planning strategy and he wanted a blog article to introduce the concept to his followers and website visitors.

## Why effective career planning starts with your unique strengths



Image by PourquoiPas from Pixabay

## “I hate my job”

We've all been there.

Whether it's the Monday blues or living for the weekend, it's not a nice place to be.

But have you considered **why** you hate your job?

Do you find your work is tedious and not challenging enough?

Is it too changeable, unpredictable and stressful?

Or too demanding – leaving you perpetually overwhelmed and exhausted?

You might be thinking that the problem is you – and that’s perfectly normal. Because as humans we tend to think it’s what we’re missing that’s holding us back.

However – and this is good news for you – it’s more likely that the job is not the right fit for you and doesn’t align with your unique strengths.

***“The key to career happiness and success is to focus on your unique strengths and find a role where you can use those strengths.”***

## What are unique strengths?

Your unique strengths are what you’re naturally good at and enjoy doing.

Put simply, job roles that play to your unique strengths make you feel good, energised and inspired.

By identifying, developing and refining these strengths, you have the capacity to excel in your career. And this makes you stand out from everybody else – because nobody can be a better you than you!

But you know this already.

The problem is, we’re more prone to focusing on our weaknesses. And we often waste energy on trying to overcome those weaknesses, when we could be thriving doing what we naturally do best.

## How do we end up stuck in the wrong job?

You can fall into doing the wrong type of work by mistake. And, like a bad dream, you don’t know it until you’re in it.

Recently, I was working with a client who ran into this exact problem. It all started when he took a promotion into a management position. Logically, this promotion looked like the next step in his career – his reward for years of loyalty, hard work and commitment.

In theory, everything should’ve been great. He was earning more money, had a better title and a higher status.

But he’d gone from a technical hands-on job he excelled in, to a role that was mainly people management. And he quickly realised he’d made a mistake.

He wasn’t suited to this new role, he didn’t like managing people – and he missed being the technical expert, because that’s what he was good at.

Suddenly work felt like a drain. He was constantly stressed and was now confused about what to do next.

Should he stay on and struggle or go and look for something else?

Bottom line: where his old role played to his strengths, his new role was playing to his weaknesses.

Once he got clarity around this, everything became simpler and his choices became much clearer.

And that's why investing time and energy in planning a career is important.

## Career planning for your unique strengths

Career planning is about understanding what you're good at, then matching those skills, talents and interests to a fulfilling and successful career path.

My best advice to you is, if you're planning a career move, always ask yourself "does this job play to my strengths?"

If a new job comes up and you're wondering whether to go for it, look at the responsibilities of the role and decide if they're aligned with your strengths.

I've seen it too many times. People have gone for a job or promotion, because it seemed like the logical next step up the career ladder. But they didn't realise the new role was actually aligned with some of their weaknesses.

This is one of the reasons I ask clients who are going for promotion, "Do you really want this promotion?" If their answer is lukewarm, it means they really don't know if they want that promotion or if that promotion would suit them. And that could be trouble.

If your intuition is telling you not to go for that promotion, or that you're stuck in the wrong career – listen to it. And trust that there's a way out, because nothing is permanent and you can change course.

Yes that might take time, but you can make it happen for you.

**"Bottom line: people who have successful careers know what their strengths are. They find career paths that leverage these strengths and allow them to thrive."**

## The benefits of planning a career based on strengths

In my experience, knowing your unique strengths and what you have to offer as an individual will set you apart from the competition and give you more career options.

People who play to their strengths:

- Feel more energised and stimulated at work
- Are more comfortable and confident in their roles
- Experience less stress and overwhelm
- Achieve more of their goals, because the work they do is easier for them
- Have more healthy career wellbeing.

According to [Cliftons Strengths](#), those who play to their strengths are also six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs and three times as likely to report having an excellent quality of life.

Now you understand the benefits of playing to your strengths, you need to understand how to identify those unique strengths.

***“The good news is that when your career decisions are based on your unique strengths, you’ll be inspired by the possibilities. Your options for career progression will become clearer to you and will feel more attainable. And you’ll see a way to progress that’s practical and sustainable.”***

## How to recognise your unique strengths

Let me ask you a few questions to get you thinking.

- What was the best day you’ve ever had at work?
- What was it that made it so great?
- What specific tasks were you doing and which of your skills were you using?

This is a good way to start identifying some of your strengths.

You can also think about the tasks that:

- You’ve found most enjoyable and satisfying
- Have made you feel energised and enthusiastic
- Have challenged you in a stimulating way
- Don’t feel like work
- You get the most positive feedback for
- Colleagues come to you for help with
- Make you feel most focused and driven.

Think about the career skills you have and enjoy using, for example:

- People/social skills
- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Technical skills
- Design/development
- Management.

In addition, consider activities you do outside work, such as hobbies or volunteering. Are there transferable skills you enjoy, such as relationship-building or organising events?

Finally, also think about your personality as a strength, so try completing a [personality test](#) to help you understand yourself better.

Now here’s the good part that can be very interesting: Talk to colleagues, friends and family who you can trust to be honest with you. Ask them what they would say your



strengths are. Don't be surprised if new stuff pops up. Their insights and perspective might alert you to strengths you wouldn't have thought of by yourself.

And remember, you're the expert here and the person who makes the final decision about your career. Only you know what's right for you and only you can decide exactly what you want.

***“You can't expect to succeed when you're struggling to do something that doesn't come naturally to you. In my experience, you stand out from the crowd when you're thriving and making a difference at work – and that's usually because you're playing to your strengths.”***

The first thing to do is develop the right mindset.

## Developing a career planning mindset

You might be wondering, what is a career planning mindset?

Let me explain: if you're taking a new approach to planning your career, it's important to have the right mindset.

In essence, this is about being open to looking at your career from a different viewpoint.

What I've found is that careers need extra care and attention every now and again. You need to take some time to work **on** your career as well as **in** your career.

Here are three exercises and tips you might find helpful.

### 3 Career mindset exercises and tips

#### 1. Determine what might be holding you back

If you've been stuck in the wrong job for a while, it's good to analyse how much of your time and energy you're spending doing the wrong type of work.

Ask yourself, what elements of your job play to your strengths? And what parts of your job play to your weaknesses?

Ultimately, you want to spend the majority of your time and energy playing to your strengths.

#### 2. Remember, it's human to have strengths and weaknesses

Let yourself off the hook. Nobody's perfect.

Take time to thoroughly explore your strengths **and** your weaknesses. The more you understand about them, the easier they will be to manage.

You can develop your strengths and a career to match over time. And you'll know what jobs to avoid by knowing your weaknesses.

### **3. Avoid comparing yourself with others**

This is a lot easier to say than do.

But comparing yourself with others will only ever demotivate you. Because someone else will always seem to have it better and be having more success.

Remember, you're on your own unique career path, focusing on your own unique strengths. And, in the end, the only true comparison you can make is to compare your new self with your old self and see how far you've come.

You're playing in a single player game where you get to keep the score — so give yourself a good score!

## **How to start improving your career today**

When you've identified your key strengths, you can start planning a career you feel excited about. And, as you've probably realised, the employment and careers area has changed rapidly over the last twenty years.

Nobody can fully future-proof their career because nobody can predict the future. However, you can manage your career better by taking a few simple steps.

### **5 Steps you can take today**

Here are five things you can do today that will help you start working towards your career aspirations:

#### **1. Talk to your manager about your personal development**

Your manager has a big impact on your career.

So how, according to your manager, is your career going? You might be positively or negatively surprised by their answer.

Talking to your manager is a good place to start if you'd like to further your experience in certain areas, learn more about a different aspect of the job or get more detailed feedback on your performance.

#### **2. Think about the tasks you most enjoy**

Can you find ways to incorporate more of these tasks into your day-to-day work?

#### **3. Think about the tasks you don't enjoy**

Could your co-workers support you in some way to make these tasks less daunting?

#### **4. Use your strengths to overcome your weaknesses**

There may be ways to use your strengths that will help you succeed in areas where you feel weaker.

#### **5. Focus on what you find most stimulating**

Be careful to avoid getting fixated on job titles and more established career paths. Focusing on what energises and excites you will be the key to effective career planning going forward.

***“Taking charge of your career is like captaining a boat. If you put up your sail and see where the wind takes you, you risk ending up adrift or washed up in the wrong place. But if you take the helm and fire up the engine, you can steer yourself towards a brighter and more successful future.”***

## About the author

Terry O’Brien is a certified career and leadership coach, mentor, and owner of his own career coaching business.

Over more than 20 years, Terry has worked with hundreds of clients – from students and graduates to business owners and CEOs – across all industries.

He has used his coaching insights and expertise to create the ‘Career Wellbeing Framework’, a unique process designed to help people achieve high performance, success and fulfilment in all areas of their careers.

As a career coach and mentor, Terry works with clients across Ireland and the UK. He uses his unique insights to help them find stimulating and rewarding careers that align with their personal strengths.

For more information, visit [terryobriencareers.com](http://terryobriencareers.com)



## CLIENT: Bother

Bother is an ethical online store selling household essentials to consumers in the UK. Its range includes well-known brand names alongside sustainable, eco-friendly, and fair-trade grocery products. The company also specialises in products for health-conscious consumers and those with special dietary needs.

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### ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

Bother's target customers care about the environment and want to look at more natural and eco-friendly options wherever they can. I wrote this article to highlight some of the problems with toilet paper and suggest more sustainable choices.

## How to choose more sustainable toilet paper



Image by Alexa from Pixabay

## Not all countries use toilet paper

It's estimated that [only 30% of the world's population](#) uses toilet paper. The other 70% use either water or soft leaves.

In India, for example, toilet paper isn't used much outside hotels and tourist spots. Locals clean themselves with water, which they consider much more hygienic.

In parts of Europe, bidets are commonly used in homes. And Japan has these amazing [high-tech toilets](#), which combine a toilet, a bidet and a sink that recycles your hand-washing water for the next flush.

Using water is generally considered to be more efficient than wiping. But as this option hasn't yet taken off in the UK, toilet roll is very much still on our shopping lists.

# The environmental impact of toilet paper

The average UK consumer gets through around 127 toilet rolls every year. Between us, that adds up to a whopping 1.3 million tonnes.

But what many consumers don't seem to realise, is just how much of our toilet paper is made from virgin wood pulp. This means trees have to be cut down to make it.

In the UK alone, we get through [7 million trees](#) worth of toilet paper every year. One tree produces 800-1500 toilet rolls – depending on the size of the tree and the quality/length of the roll.

If those trees aren't grown sustainably, this is contributing to mass deforestation and the destruction of animal habitats. This is something that should concern us all.

So how can we, as consumers, choose more sustainable toilet paper?

In this guide, we'll give you the information you need and tell you what you need to look for.

## Choose plastic-free toilet paper

If you want to buy more environmentally friendly toilet paper, start by looking at the packaging it comes in.

### What is plastic-free toilet paper?

When we talk about plastic-free toilet paper, this means it hasn't been packaged in plastic film.

In the UK we use around [5 million tonnes](#) of plastic every year – and nearly half of that is packaging. Rather than being recycled, most of this plastic is [shipped abroad](#) where it ends up in landfills or polluting the waterways.

You'll find most supermarket toilet paper is still packed in plastic. If there's no other option, you can check that the film is recyclable and make sure you recycle it according to the instructions.

## Choose recycled toilet paper

If you want to be sure that no trees were harmed in the making of your toilet paper, one of the best ways is to buy recycled.

### How is recycled toilet paper made?

Despite what some people say, recycled toilet paper is not made from used toilet paper. That would be gross!

Instead, it's mostly made from used white and coloured office paper. The waste paper is shredded and made into bales. The bales are then taken to the toilet paper factory.

At the factory, the paper is mixed with lukewarm water and pulped.

The wet pulped paper is then injected with air. This makes all the ink rise to the top, so it can be skimmed off and removed.

The next step is to remove the water. This is done by squeezing the pulp through heavy rollers. At this point, the pulp is a murky grey colour, so some manufacturers treat it with bleach to whiten it.

The pulp is then spread onto a flat screen and run through a dryer. This is where it turns from pulp into thin paper. It can then be rolled onto large spools and embossed.

Embossing patterns into the paper doesn't just make it look pretty, it also makes it thicker, stronger and more absorbent.

The embossed paper can then be rolled onto a long cardboard inner tubes and sliced into individual rolls.

## How to choose recycled toilet paper

The best recycled toilet paper you can buy is 100% recycled – and it should say this on the packaging.

If you can't find 100% recycled toilet paper, you can check the packaging to find out what you're buying.

### Look for FSC labelling

FSC is short for the Forestry Stewardship Council. This is a non-profit organisation that's committed to ensuring high standards in forestry.

You'll find that most toilet roll packaging has the FSC Mix label. This means the product has been made from a mixture of virgin wood pulp and recycled materials. Some of that virgin wood pulp will be from well-managed FSC-certified forests – but not all of it.

Some of the pulp is also from sources that are thought to be low risk, but haven't actually been certified.

### What if there's no labelling?

If your toilet roll packaging doesn't tell you what the paper is made from or where it comes from, this is usually a bad sign. It suggests that the paper is made from virgin wood pulp – and that the trees used to make it were not from sustainable sources.

## Choose unbleached toilet paper

Bleach is used to whiten, strengthen and soften our toilet paper.

For many brands, the bleaching process uses a form of chlorine. But this produces highly toxic dioxins and pollutants, which are harmful to both the environment and our health.

Recycled toilet paper typically requires less bleaching than virgin tree fibres.

If you want to choose unbleached toilet paper, and other unbleached paper products, you need to check the label. Here's what to look for:

### **Processed Chlorine-Free (PCF)**

This is the best option available. It shows that no chlorine is used in the processing *or* bleaching of the paper.

### **Totally Chlorine-Free (TCF)**

This shows that no chlorine is used to bleach the paper. So there are no dioxins or chlorinated toxic pollutants involved.

Instead, the paper is bleached using oxygen, peroxide and ozone systems.

### **Elemental Chlorine-Free (ECF)**

This process uses a chlorine compound. It reduces dioxides, but doesn't eliminate them completely.

## **Choose bamboo toilet paper**

If you want to buy a more sustainable toilet paper, bamboo could be the future.

One of the main problems with using virgin wood pulp is the amount of time it takes for trees to grow. This can be anything from 10 to 30 years depending on the type of tree, the climate it's grown in and its access to water.

But as bamboo is a grass, its regrowth is much, much quicker. In fact, bamboo is one of the fastest growing plants on earth. One particular species of bamboo can grow up to 4cm an hour — so fast you can almost see it growing!

Using bamboo is more eco-friendly than using trees. It can be grown sustainably and harvested regularly. And a bamboo plantation takes up much less space than a forest.

### **How is bamboo toilet paper made?**

Raw bamboo is cut from the plantation and taken for processing.

At the factory, it's pulped, then passed through giant rollers that flatten it and turn it into toilet paper.

Like virgin wood, the bamboo is versatile and can be used to make the toilet paper itself, the inner tubes and the outer packaging.

## **Does bamboo toilet paper break down?**

Yes. Bamboo toilet paper breaks down fully, quickly and naturally in water. So it won't block your toilet or clog up your pipes.

## **Is bamboo toilet paper better?**

Bamboo is a naturally soft and strong product, so it doesn't need treating or bleaching with chemicals.

And its natural softness makes it kinder to your bum than recycled toilet paper, which can sometimes be rough and scratchy!

## **Ready to buy more sustainable toilet paper?**

We currently stock two varieties of sustainable toilet paper.

### **Recycled toilet paper**

[Who Gives a Crap toilet paper](#) is made from 100% recycled books and office paper.

This 3-ply toilet paper is soft, strong and comes in double-length rolls – so it's very, very long too!

### **Bamboo toilet paper**

[Cheeky Panda toilet roll](#) is made from 100% natural and sustainable bamboo, which is grown without fertilisers or pesticides.

The paper is a pure, natural product made without harsh chemicals or chlorine bleach.

And it gives luxury 3-ply comfort with a super soft finish.