5 Mistakes to Avoid in CDP 2026

A guide for companies that disclosed in 2025 and want a stronger score this cycle.

22,100+	4%	4
companies disclosed to CDP in 2025	made the A-List	scoring levels with essential-criteria gates

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Introduction

Every year, thousands of companies submit CDP disclosures and leave points on the table — not because they lack data, but because they don't map their responses to how CDP actually scores.

CDP doesn't just check whether you disclosed. It scores across four progressive levels — Disclosure (D), Awareness (C), Management (B), and Leadership (A) — using essential-criteria gates at each level. Miss a must-have data point and your score is capped, regardless of what else you submit.

In 2025, over 22,000 companies disclosed to CDP. Roughly 20,000 were scored. Of those, 877 made the A-List — about 4%.

This guide covers the five structural mistakes that most commonly block companies from advancing through CDP's scoring levels, drawn from CDP's published scoring methodology and the patterns visible in A-List disclosures.

Source: CDP Scores Data, cdp.net/en/data/scores

How CDP Scoring Works

D Disclosure	C Awareness	B Management	A Leadership

Each level has essential-criteria gates. You must clear each before the next counts. An A-List score requires 80%+ at the Leadership tier.

What's Inside

1	Treating CDP as "just another questionnaire" instead of a gated scoring methodology
2	Incomplete or poorly verified emissions data — especially Scope 3
3	Weak climate governance and risk narrative
4	Data inconsistency with BRSR, sustainability reports, and previous CDP cycles
5	Underestimating value chain and supplier engagement

MISTAKE 1

Treating CDP as "just another questionnaire" instead of a gated scoring methodology

WHAT GOES WRONG

Most companies fill the CDP questionnaire section by section, treating it like a form to complete. They answer every question they can, attach supporting documents, and submit.

What they don't do is map their answers to CDP's Essential Criteria — the specific data points that act as gatekeepers at each scoring level. These gates mean that certain questions carry disproportionate weight. Miss one, and your overall score is capped at a lower band no matter how thorough the rest of your disclosure is.

WHAT IT COSTS YOU

A company can submit a detailed, well-written disclosure and still score a C if it hasn't provided the must-have data points required to clear the Awareness gate. The scoring methodology is structured, not subjective — and companies that don't study it are playing a game without knowing the rules.

WHAT LEADING COMPANIES DO INSTEAD

Before drafting a single answer, A-List companies run a gap analysis against CDP's scoring methodology. They identify which Essential Criteria apply at each level, flag the ones they can't yet meet, and prioritise closing those gaps. The disclosure process starts with the scoring logic, not the questionnaire.

MISTAKE 2

Incomplete or poorly verified emissions data — especially Scope 3

WHAT GOES WRONG

CDP expects robust quantitative data for Scope 1, Scope 2, and relevant Scope 3 categories. But many companies still omit material Scope 3 categories, rely on rough spend-based estimates, or submit emissions data without third-party verification.

100%	70%
Scope 1+2 verification now required for Leadership	Scope 3 verified coverage needed for Management gate

WHAT IT COSTS YOU

CDP's scoring has tightened around verification. Leadership-level scores now require third-party verification of 100% of Scope 1 and 2 emissions (up from 70% in previous cycles), plus verified coverage of at least 70% of one material Scope 3 category to clear the Management gate.

Companies that skip verification or submit unverified Scope 3 estimates are increasingly blocked from advancing to Management and Leadership, regardless of narrative quality.

WHAT LEADING COMPANIES DO INSTEAD

Companies like Infosys and Microsoft publish verified GHG inventories across Scopes 1, 2, and 3, accompanied by environmental data fact sheets and verification declarations. They treat assurance as a baseline, not an optional add-on.

Source: CDP Scoring Methodology; CDP Climate Change Questionnaire Guidance

MISTAKE 3

Weak climate governance and risk narrative

WHAT GOES WRONG

At the Awareness and Management levels, CDP's Essential Criteria require a clear, defined process for identifying, assessing, and managing environmental risks and opportunities — with evidence that these are discussed at board level at a stated frequency.

Most disclosures say something like "climate is integrated into our enterprise risk management" and stop there. No reference to specific methodologies (TCFD, ISO 31000, scenario analysis). No link to financial planning or capital allocation. No stated frequency of board-level review.

WHAT IT COSTS YOU

This is one of the most common reasons companies stall between Awareness (C) and Management (B). CDP is looking for a process, not a statement. Without concrete methodology, governance evidence, and a risk-to-strategy linkage, the disclosure reads as aspirational rather than operational.

What CDP Reviewers Look For in Governance

Defined risk identification methodology (TCFD, ISO 31000, scenario analysis)
Board-level oversight with stated frequency
Link between climate risks and financial planning / capital allocation
Internal carbon pricing or equivalent strategic tool
Risk governance strategy financial planning chain

WHAT LEADING COMPANIES DO INSTEAD

Infosys explicitly maps climate risks into its enterprise risk management framework and scenario analysis, describes board oversight with defined frequency, and references internal carbon pricing as a strategic tool. This is the kind of "risk governance strategy financial planning" chain that CDP rewards at the Management and Leadership levels.

MISTAKE 4

Data inconsistency with BRSR, sustainability reports, and previous CDP cycles

WHAT GOES WRONG

CDP reviewers look for consistency — across years, across frameworks, and across reporting boundaries. When a company's Scope 1+2 figures in CDP don't match what's reported in BRSR, or when energy and water data conflict with the integrated report, or when methodologies change between cycles without explanation, the disclosure loses credibility.

This is particularly acute for Indian listed companies, which now disclose detailed environmental metrics under BRSR and BRSR Core — GHG inventory, energy mix, water consumption, intensity ratios. Investors and reviewers increasingly cross-check.

WHAT IT COSTS YOU

Inconsistencies undermine scoring under both "Disclosure" and "Management" quality criteria. Even if each individual dataset is accurate, unexplained discrepancies between CDP, BRSR, and prior CDP submissions suggest weak data governance — and you miss data-quality and governance points.

WHAT LEADING COMPANIES DO INSTEAD

The most efficient companies design a single ESG data architecture and map that dataset to BRSR, CDP, GRI, IFRS S1/S2, and TCFD. This ensures consistency across frameworks and reduces the duplication that leads to errors.

Source: SEBI BRSR/BRSR Core framework; CDP Scoring Methodology

MISTAKE 5

Underestimating value chain and supplier engagement

WHAT GOES WRONG

CDP 2026 places heavy emphasis on value-chain emissions, supplier engagement, and procurement influence — especially in Scope 3 and the forests/water modules. Many companies report their own operational footprint in detail but give only generic statements about supplier engagement: “we encourage suppliers to reduce emissions” or “we plan to engage our supply chain.”

WHAT IT COSTS YOU

Generic statements don’t score. CDP is looking for structured supplier programmes, capacity building, collaborative decarbonisation roadmaps, and measurable supplier-level improvements. Companies that ignore supplier engagement, logistics, financed emissions, or the customer use phase lose major Management and Leadership points.

Tata Steel: Supplier Engagement Rating "A"

Built on structured Scope 3 governance, supplier training programmes, and collaborative decarbonisation roadmaps. Similarly, companies like ReNew detail structured supplier programmes and link them to specific investment commitments (storage, green hydrogen, efficiency).

This is the difference between a statement and a programme.

Source: CDP Supplier Engagement Assessment; Tata Steel CDP Disclosure

What to Do Next

If you disclosed to CDP in 2025, your previous response is the best diagnostic tool you have — it shows exactly where you left points on the table.

1. Audit your 2025 disclosure against this guide.

Go mistake by mistake. Where are your gaps? Which Essential Criteria did you miss? Where is your verification coverage?

2. Start your free trial of CDP AI Partner.

We're giving 50 companies free, unlimited access to CDP AI Partner for Module 2 (Climate Change). It works alongside the official CDP portal — real-time scoring intelligence, AI-drafted response suggestions, and methodology alignment as you fill your disclosure. No documents to upload.

1	Go to reblueventures.com/cdp-ai-partner
2	Sign up and install the Chrome plugin
3	Use CDP AI Partner alongside the CDP portal — free for Module 2

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First 50 companies. First come, first served.

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