This piece of "advice", which is currently making its way around via social media and the blogosphere, claims that all one need do to find out the chemical makeup of tube contents such as toothpaste and creams is to check the colour of a small square on the bottom of the tube. According to the message, a green square means contents are all natural, red means mostly chemicals with some natural composition, and black means only chemicals are used.

But alas, this supposed helpful tip is in fact utter nonsense. The rectangular marks or lines on tubes referred to in the message, are using in the packaging process. The marks are known in the packaging industry as "eye marks" (or sometimes "eye spots"). They do not in any way indicate the chemical content of the tubes they are displayed on, regardless of what colour they are. That is not their role.

Eye marks can be identified by electronic eyes used in sophisticated modern packaging machinery. The marks serve a variety of packaging purposes such as telling the machine where to cut and crimp tubes or indicating the desired colour of print on packaging. Many products have such eye marks, although they may not always be visible to consumers as they are on tubes.

Rather ironically, the message poses the question "did you know squares on tubes mean something" and then answers the question with an outright lie. In fact, the "squares" do mean something - to packaging machines and the people who operate them. But, to the average consumer they mean nothing at all.

Want to know what a tube's contents consist of? It is most likely listed right there on the side of the tube in some detail. Or, you might find even more detailed information about the product's content on the company's website or elsewhere on the Internet. But rest assured, the colour of the little mark on the tube's base will tell you nothing whatsoever about its chemical makeup.