

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

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Giving the Gift of Sustainability

While the holiday season is full of so much cheer and celebration, the season of giving can also be filled with a lot of waste. Between presents, wrapping paper, shopping bags, food scraps and decorations, [Americans throw out 25% more trash in the winter holiday season](#). All of the festivities are fun, but how can you partake in the holiday celebration without contributing to all of the holiday waste? Here are some tips to help you enjoy the holiday sustainably.

Get Creative with Cards

Instead of contributing to the mass amount of waste from greeting cards, try new ways to spread your season's greetings. For example, you can reuse old cards that you've received or craft a card out of whatever paper and craft supplies you have in your house. If you don't want to try an arts and crafts project, you can also purchase a card that is made out of recycled material and is sustainably sourced. Look for trusted certifications, like that of the Forest Stewardship Council, on the back of your card if you're unsure about its environmental impact. Also be aware before buying one of those cards that have the twinkling lights or the "perfect" holiday song: these cards have batteries and often lead solder that will eventually end up in the trash.

You can also send your holiday cheer virtually through an e-card. E-cards eliminate the paper waste of a card altogether and avoid the carbon emissions that come with sending your cards through the mail. Switching up the traditional holiday greeting card can help limit the amount of waste you generate, and you might just spread some extra holiday cheer with your creativity!

Rethink How You Gift

While it's amazing to practice sustainability yourself, you can also share it with others by giving sustainable gifts to your family and friends! There are plenty of great items that fit the bill, including reusable cups and mugs, naturally-made soaps, sustainably-made clothing and reusable straws. You can also make your holiday gifts to reduce all the waste involved with gift-giving; try baking cookies, knitting a blanket or making soaps or a candle. Homemade gifts are better for the environment than mass-produced gifts that take up energy and resources. [There are plenty of easy do-it-yourself holiday gifts out there that help you save money and the environment!](#) Gifting an experience is also a great sustainable option that a recipient can truly appreciate. Whether the experience is a trip, concert, sports game or restaurant, it can be an eco-friendly gift that everyone can enjoy without having to produce more waste. And there's always the gift of your time or assistance: offers of babysitting, lawn mowing, meal preparation, etc.

However, if you are going the shopping route, consider what stores and brands you're buying from during the holiday season. Try shopping from brands that have more environmentally friendly practices or shopping locally. If you want to be mindful of reducing carbon emissions during your shopping season, skip the online shopping – having your orders shipped contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. If shopping online is a must, try choosing online stores that work to reduce their environmental impact.

Wrapping Up the Holiday Cheer

When it comes to gifts, less wrapping is more helpful to the environment. You may enjoy the festive wrapping paper and bright-colored bows, but that wrapping paper is immediately ripped off and thrown away once someone opens it. Luckily, there are plenty of other options for wrapping your gift that allow you to be sustainable while also looking festive. If you decide to go the wrapping paper route, purchase recyclable wrapping paper and make sure to recycle it after it's used, instead of throwing it in the trash. You can also get creative with your wrapping paper options by using old wrapping paper, newspapers, catalogs, junk mail or comic books. Reusable materials, like a gift bag or tote bag, are also a great option compared to wrapping paper. A reusable item like a tote bag is also a fun gift that the recipient can keep using, or level up and use crocheted or knitted bags made from scrap fabric! And use last year's holiday cards to make gift tags. Getting creative with your wrapping can help reduce your waste by quite a bit, creating a more sustainable holiday season.

Make sure to try out a few of these tips this holiday season to celebrate the festivities and the environment. We hope you enjoy your holiday and give the gift of sustainability to your family and friends this year. And once the fun is over, remember to recycle the gift paper and boxes and don't forget your tree! Contact your local transfer station/recycling center for details or add it to your yard compost.

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