

# HOLIDAY GIFT-GIVING GUIDE

As the holidays creep closer and closer with the decorations and first fall of snow, the stress around gift giving becomes almost palpable. On top of the stress on each other, gift giving can definitely stress out our wallets and our planet. According to a Stanford study, it is estimated that we create 25% more waste during the holiday season than at any other time during the year! There are ways to limit all of these negative effects during the holidays, and this is exactly what we aim to show you in this sustainable holiday guide because it shouldn't be difficult and complicated to do the right thing!

## 1 REDUCE

Reduce your waste

## 2 REUSE

Reuse and repurpose wrapping and gifts

## 3 RECYCLE

Recycle what you cannot reduce or reuse

## 4 RETHINK

Rethink what gift-giving means



# REDUCE

## Gift-buying with mindful purchasing goals

With the holidays rolling around the corner, our temptations to indulge in all materialistic items tend to be more than our regular consumption affairs as we visit the mall and go out for dinner more frequently. For centuries, we have all known holidays to be the time of the year where we overspend, overeat, overdrink and overly decorate our houses. Sadly, our capitalist society has normalized such overindulging habits, as the second October 31st passes, stores are already bombarding us with the overwhelming yet cheerful advertisement of their holiday collection.

The materialist quality of our holidays has made gift giving a key component to our celebrations and the way we share love and joy. However, our gifts might not be as appreciated as we believe, as a survey on Finders.com revealed that over 61 percent of surveyed Americans admitted receiving one unwanted gift.

### Most unwanted gifts

Accessories (43%)

Household items (20%)

Cosmetics and fragrances (12%)

Literature (8%)

Technology (5%)

Music (4%)

Food or drink (4%)

### Most returned gifts

Board games

Toiletries and fragrances

Celebrity cookbooks

Slippers

Autobiographies

Christmas sweaters

Fitness DVDs

Selfie Sticks

Unfortunately, the chance for some of these gifts to eventually end up in landfills is very high. Luckily, there are so many ways to make the gift-giving culture less harmful to the planet by being more thoughtful about your consumer habits.

There are many ways you can reduce your environmental impact when it comes to shopping for a gift. The following page provides some tips that can help you be more mindful about your purchases this holiday season!



# REUSE

Gift-giving repurposed and saved wrapping paper

Overall, reusing material to wrap gifts or gifting things you used in the past that have sentimental value is much better for the environment. It's a great opportunity to get creative this holiday season! More often than not, we already have items lying around that can be repurposed for either gift wrapping or gift giving. By repurposing items, you're not only saving money, but also helping the environment!



## HOW TO REUSE GIFTS

When it comes to gifts, you don't always need to buy new things. Often you can repurpose gifts that you've received that did not speak to you or give someone something special of yours you would like them to have. This could be your favourite book, home decor items, self-care routine, or playlists of songs you think they would like! Sharing what you love with others can be a great opportunity to reuse or repurpose things we already own/know/do while sharing a piece of you with them!

Sharing is caring!



# ALTERNATIVES TO NON-RECYCLABLE WRAPPING PAPER



## KRAFT PAPER

Using kraft paper may seem plain but this blank canvas gives you the opportunity to really let your creative side come out and decorate the paper. Often this offers a more personalized gift as well. Go for a walk outside and pick up any pinecones or pine sprigs you find, they make for great gift decorations or just for house decor!

## RECYCLED PAPER

Purchase paper from brands that use their paper from recycled materials, such as Wrappilly Wrapping Paper. This wrapping paper is printed using the local newspaper. The printing process itself requires a lot less energy and uses soy based inks. A piece of newsprint can be recycled up to 7 times which makes it a great wrapping paper and a good replacement for tissue paper!



## REUSABLE FABRIC WRAPPING

Consider making a one time purchase of fabric wrapping paper that can be used an unlimited number of times. This alternative to wrapping paper is the best as it can be reused multiple times for any season and for any celebration. Fabric wrapping paper is not only the best environmental option but it also saves you money in the long run! We suggest checking out [eco-cado](https://www.eco-cado.com) to support local!

**FUN FACT:** If every American family wrapped just 3 presents in reused materials, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields!



# RECYCLE

Gift-giving repurposed and better wrapping paper



We often overlook the environmental consequences of the holidays especially when it comes to waste. With lots of gifts comes lots of **wrapping paper and shopping bags**, which for the most part are not recyclable and, are therefore **responsible for 80% of the additional 5 million tons of waste generated over the holidays** in the United States alone. In addition to wrapping paper being responsible for generating the most waste during the holidays, according to Zero Waste Canada, **2.6 billion holiday cards are thrown out every year** as well as **6 million rolls of tape**. These worrisome statistics raise the question, how can we reduce the amount of waste we produce during the holiday season while still keeping the tradition of wrapping gifts and sending cards to our loved ones?

## IS YOUR WRAPPING PAPER RECYCLABLE?

Next time you buy some wrapping paper, consider the following the following questions

### Is this wrapping paper an actual paper?

Meaning, if you tear the paper you will be able to tell that it's fibre if you can't tell, the paper is not recyclable because the fibres found in cheaper types of wrapping paper are not strong enough to recycle. You can also do the scrunch test and if the paper bounces back in your hand, it cannot be recycled

### Does the paper contain glitter and other decorative elements?

If you notice the paper has lots of glitter and glue, or other elements such as velour, pompoms, plastic crystals, avoid these wrapping papers at all costs. These are the most harmful for the environment. The more simple the better!

### Is the paper laminated?

If the paper has a glossy feel and a shiny finish, it is probably laminated and makes it impossible to recycle. Instead, opt for a matte finish with a paper feel rather than a glossy touch.



# RETHINK

Gift-giving with **intention**, by discovering the recipient's **love language**

Yes, the traditional Green Rs don't use Rethink, but clearly we need to start rethinking the way we do the holidays, if there are so many negative effects from an act that at its core has the intention of celebrating bringing love and happiness to others and ourselves.

What can I buy/give this person to  
bring them joy?

Rethink!

How can I show my appreciation for  
this person?

To rethink the gift-giving process we need to start thinking about each person individually and put thoughtfulness into what we give them because we tend to assume everyone wants physical gifts but that is not the case. This could mean learning their love language as these can be a great starting point and an assurance that your message will be received as intended. Many people have more than one love language, which gives you the opportunity to combine these ideas.

## CHOOSING GIFTS BASED ON LOVE LANGUAGES

### WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

- writing a detailed letter explaining what you enjoy most about that person
- get them a fill-in book that they can use a little bit every day
- make them something using lines from their favourite songs/movies/books

### ACTS OF SERVICE

- volunteering to help them do a task they've been pushing off or struggling with (cooking, cleaning, organizing, shopping)
- making a curated list of things you think they would enjoy (playlist of songs, list of recipes, book recommendations)
- book an experience for the both of you (like a spa day or outdoor activity)

### PHYSICAL TOUCH

- book a massage/haircut/manicure for them
- offer them a cozy or weighted blanket



## QUALITY TIME

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- plan a vacation/staycation
- sign each other up for a class/activity you would both enjoy
- make a list of movies or name a tv show and plan to watch it together every week/month

## RECEIVING GIFTS

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- This is where you can get creative and intentional about what you want to give them based on their hobbies, likes, inside jokes and stories! For a list of suggestions, we have a JSEC holiday wishlist at the end of this guide, but we also suggest you ask yourself the following questions before buying your gifts.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE BUYING A GIFT

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### Will this gift be used to its full potential?

We've all had to perform the fake-smile-and-thank-you after receiving something you don't like or know you'll never use and truthfully you may have been on the other side of the story too! These gifts end up being a waste of time and money for the giver as well as wasted resources, wrapping and just overall waste. There is no shame in asking the person if they could use anything, and it will just reassure you that they will actually use their gift!

### Can I avoid large corporations and support smaller businesses/artists/merchants to make this gift happen?

This is your opportunity to shop with your dollar and purchase from local brands, coops, certified B corporations, and cruelty-free vegan brands. If you're in Quebec we suggest Boutique Locale, Marché Bonsecours, Etsy and any independent local or zero-waste stores around you. For a description of which labels to look out for when shopping, check out our blog article!

### Can I give a used version of this?

For many items like vinyls, books, vintage pieces, jewelry, instruments, games, decor items or tableware their value remains the same and even increases as time goes on especially if they can be refurbished.

# Mindful Purchasing: A Guide

## Set a budget.

Not only will this reduce the impact on your wallet, but it will also limit you from splurging on unnecessary items and give you a plan to follow.

## Buy your presents in person!

Though online shopping may be much more efficient during these stressful times, shipping a present involves so much extra packaging and demands additional transportation. Another tip would be to bring your reusable bags when shopping for gifts in person. When we buy in person, we can really get a feel for the item and gauge the quality and size of the items, which may reduce the risks that the gift will be returned.

## Ask the gift receiver what they want.

Yes, this may ruin the element of surprise of gift-giving, but it shows the person that you care for them by assuring that the gift you are giving them will bring them happiness and not end up in a landfill. You never know it can turn out that they ask for a non-material present!

## Buy from minimal packaging companies.

Some companies you should check out include [EQ3](#), a furniture company that sells a variety of home decor, [Kotn](#), a Toronto-based sustainable retail store selling cotton basics and [Kay Inay](#), a woman-of-colour gift company that curates gifts exclusively featuring Canadian brands and businesses and who are mindful about their packaging.

## Choose gifts made out of recycled materials.

Not only will this contribute to diverting materials from the waste stream, but it is also another way of supporting individuals and small businesses who focus on the development of such products. A few examples of some great gifts made out of 50% recycled materials include [Neutrall Upcycled Glass Cups](#), [Recycled Denim Towel](#), [Team Timbuktu Recycled Activewear](#).

## Buy battery-free gifts.

Battery-powered gifts are big energy consumers as rechargeable batteries require electricity every time you need to charge them, contributing to air pollution and climate change. According to the EPA, it is estimated that over 28 billion batteries go to waste instead of properly being recycled every year. The effects of the poor disposal of these batteries are detrimental to the environment, as they contain hazardous heavy metals that lead to the contamination of soil and groundwater.

**Do your part in saving the environment this holiday season.**





# HOLIDAY WISHLIST

*"I would love to receive a spa day experience or gift card this holiday season because I definitely need some relaxation after all these finals!"*

*-Olivia*

*'My number one item on my wish list this holiday season is a Pangaia Sweatsuit. I love what this company does for the environment and would love to support their brand.'*

*-Andrew*

*"I would be so grateful to receive a cute set of produce bags. Not only are these bags reusable, they are also super cute."*

*-Johanna*

*"When I was out the other day, I saw these cool reusable fabric gift wrapping alternatives from eco cado and would like to get some to be able to reduce wrapping paper waste."*

*-Francois*

*This holiday season I would love to receive some Pilot Friction Pens! They are erasable and refillable!*

*-Nick*

*On my holiday wishlist this year, I am asking for tickets to see the ballet. I love spending time with my family and going to the ballet with them allows me to do so.*

*-Victoria*

*"I would love to receive a hand cream from Package Free Shop my favorite zero waste company to stay moisturized during the cold winter months"*

*-David*

*"I would love to receive a Spotify playlist filled with songs that remind me of the gifter. Whenever I listen to the playlist and I will think of them"*

*-Sarah*



## Treat yourself!

At the end of all of this thinking of others, don't forget to think about yourself and how you can show yourself the same love you show to others! Treat yourself, in whatever way will be most meaningful to you, after all you know yourself best.

