



Waste Reduction Tips for the Holidays

We love the holidays. We do more, buy more and eat more. We also throw more away. Think about it. The food waste, shopping bags, packaging, ribbons and bows, wrapping paper and boxes – it all adds up. In fact, it's estimated that between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, Americans throw away about 25 percent more trash than any other time of the year. That's an extra 1 million tons of waste each week for five weeks.

Don't waste this opportunity. Holidays are the perfect time to reduce, reuse and recycle. Not only will you be conserving natural resources and contributing other environmental benefits, you may be saving time and money, as well as, reducing your stress.

In the spirit of giving, here are some ideas to consider that will help reduce your household waste not only during the holidays, but also throughout the year:

Give More, Waste Less Gift-giving Ideas

- **Give your time.** Offer to clean someone's house. Or watch their children. Help with their pet. Run their errands. You get the idea.
- **Give your talent.** Offer, for example, your talents at gardening or photography. Teach someone to play the piano.
- **Give entertainment.** Give tickets to a game, movie or play. Give a museum or aquarium membership. Give a hunting or fishing license.
- **Give homemade.** Who doesn't like homemade cookies and other goodies? Give your homemade goodies in a tin, jar or basket that can be reused. Give handmade crafts or framed photographs.
- **Give learning.** Lots of people want to try new things but won't spend the money on themselves. Give cooking or writing classes. Give guitar or golf lessons. Knowledge is good.
- **Give health and fitness.** Give gym memberships or personal training sessions. Give classes in yoga, dance or Pilates.
- **Give pampering.** Give a gift certificate for a massage, facial, manicure or pedicure.
- **Give to the greater good.** Make a charitable donation in someone's name. Donate unwanted

toys, electronics, sports equipment, decorations, books, Halloween costumes and clothing to a non-profit organization instead of throwing them away.

- **Give gifts that keep on giving.** Consider a battery charger, perpetual calendar or an erasable message board. Avoid gag gifts. They often quickly become trash. You save money, too. Keep it simple. One thoughtful gift is better than six wrapped packages of unwanted gifts.
- **Give a gift certificate.** At least you know the gift will be kept.

Let's wrap it up (or not).

- **Don't wrap at all.** Tickets, gift certificates, house plants are good to go. See ideas above.
- **Tie a ribbon.** When giving oversized gifts – like a bicycle – don't wrap them. Just tie a bow around them.
- **Make the wrap part of the gift.** Give your homemade cookies in a reusable tin. Kitchen gifts can be wrapped in a colorful dish towel. Tools for a gardener can be placed in a flowerpot or planter.
- **Reuse.** If you have to wrap, wrap gifts in old maps, blueprints, newspapers or the Sunday comics. Wrap a sports gift with the newspaper's sports section. Reuse wrapping paper and ribbons when possible. Save your cardboard boxes, packing peanuts and bubble wrap. Use them again or give them to someone or a shipping business. When opening presents, set a box aside to collect reusable ribbons, bows and other package decorations – and then reuse them.
- **Buy recycled.** If you must buy, buy recycled-content wrapping paper.

It's in the cards.

- **Consider not buying holiday greeting cards.** Let your fingers do the walking. Send your holiday greetings electronically. E-cards can be more fun than regular greeting cards with sound and animation and they do not create any waste.
- **If you buy, buy recycled.** If you send holiday greeting cards, buy recycled-content cards and envelopes.

- **Reuse the cards.** Here's an idea – cut up and use your holiday greetings cards as gift tags next year. The ideas are endless. There are numerous Web sites that offer craft ideas for the reuse and recycling of holiday greeting cards.
- **Recycle.** You can recycle your holiday greetings cards with mixed paper or magazines – unless they are decorated with “glitter” or foil. It is important to note that St. Jude's Ranch for Children no longer accepts greeting cards. The program was too successful and St. Jude's was overwhelmed.

**Green just isn't a color anymore.
Shop with the environment in mind.**

- **Buy recycled.** Always look for recycled-content products.
- **Think durable.** This is not the time to think cheap. Rather, consider how long an item will last before you make a purchase. Often, a less expensive item will wear out long before a more durable choice.
- **Buy rechargeable batteries.** It's the perfect time – when you buy new electronics. Many retail stores in South Carolina provide programs and/or drop-off bins for the safe recycling of old, rechargeable batteries. For a location near you, visit www.rbrc.org.
- **Buy in bulk.** Buy your Thanksgiving cooking items in bulk and use the extra throughout the holiday season. This eliminates extra trips to the grocery store and reduces excess packaging.
- **Consider not buying single-use items for the big holiday meal.** Make it special. Use the real stuff including cloth napkins, drinking glasses and silverware instead of disposable paper and plastic products.
- **Just say no to paper and plastic bags.** Bring your own reusable shopping bag. If you use a plastic or paper bag, reuse it.
- **Consider buying an environmentally friendly gift.** Give a compost bin. Give a plant. Give a reusable coffee mug. Give a membership to an environmental

organization. Give a gift made from recycled materials such as wind chimes made from recycled glass.

Tree-cycle

When the holidays are over, remember to recycle your Christmas tree. Call your local recycling coordinator or visit www.scdhec.gov/environment/lwm/recycle/counties.htm to learn what opportunities exist in your community. Many communities in South Carolina offer “Grinding of the Greens” – a program where trees are chipped into mulch.

Having people over?

- **Ask your invited guests to bring reusable containers.** You know you will cook too much. They can take home the leftovers.
- **Borrow or rent what you don't have.** Need extra tables, chairs or even another grill? Consider borrowing or renting the items that you will only use occasionally. That may save you money.
- **Be a natural.** Decorate your table by making a centerpiece using an assortment of colorful fruits, vegetables and nuts. Decorate your home with holly, cedar, berries, fruits and nuts – all of which can be composted.
- **Compost.** Compost your food waste. Fruits and vegetables are perfect ingredients. For more information, see the “FYI: Backyard Composting” fact sheet.

Waste reduction and recycling aren't just for the holidays.

Make it a habit. Make a New Year's resolution to reduce waste and recycle throughout the year. For more information on buying recycled, see the “FYI: Buying Recycled ... and Beyond” fact sheet. For more information on waste reduction, see the “FYI: Waste Reduction at Home” fact sheet. For more information about recycling and other solid waste management issues, please call the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control's Office of Solid Waste Reduction and Recycling at **1-800-768-7348** or visit www.scdhec.gov/recycle.



**Office of Solid Waste
Reduction & Recycling**
1-800-768-7348 ● www.scdhec.gov/recycle

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