



GreenTip
How Do You Measure Up?



How to Green Your Holiday Wrapping, Packing and Shipping

Family and friends are a big part of the holidays. When everyone can't all be together in one place, sending cards and gifts can help make the season brighter. Whether you're sending greeting cards to aunts and uncles and cousins, exchanging gifts with old friends or shipping the comforts of home to someone serving overseas, there are steps you can take to reduce the environmental impact of your holiday cheer.

Wrapping:

Did you know that those colorful, glittery wraps, gift bags and bows can not be recycled? Most holiday gift wraps are created using metal and clay coatings that exclude them from the paper recycling process. If you're determined to buy wrapping paper and ribbons, then try a more environmentally friendly approach. Look for gift wrap that's made from 100% post-consumer recycled paper, or make your own from brown paper grocery bags that you decorate with stamps, stencils or markers, from old sheet music or maps or from newspapers and magazines. Fabric can also be a colorful alternative to wrapping paper. Try iron-on adhesive to make fabric gift bags, or use pre-made tote bags. You can also use a gift to wrap a gift. For example, wrap a present in a scarf or a towel, or use a colorful canister instead of a box.

Use fabric or raffia ribbons and bows, or decorate your gifts with some natural elements. Holly leaves and small pine cones make an elegant topper for a package. Small bells and pompoms, even buttons and old jewelry are great ideas that can be reused in years to come. Use your imagination!

For perfect gift tags, try recycling old greeting cards. Cut out seasonal images using pinking shears or specialty scissors and punch a hole in the tag so that it can be easily attached to the gift. When purchasing greeting cards, look for cards and envelopes that are printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.

Packing and Shipping:

When packing gifts for shipment to friends and family, be sure to consider eco-friendly packing materials. Cardboard boxes are completely recyclable, and many have post-consumer content. Avoid Styrofoam peanuts to protect your gifts -- try popcorn instead! The popcorn can be fed to the birds after the gifts are unpacked. If you receive gifts packed in plastic bubble wrap or peanuts, locate a shipping store in your area that will take these materials back and reuse or recycle them.

A Final Thought:

Before you wrap up your holiday gifts this year, consider this: wrapping paper, ribbons and boxes account for most of the 25% increase in curbside trash that occurs in the United States between Thanksgiving and New Years Day every year. Making a personal effort to "green" your gift wrapping can really have a positive effect on our environment!