

Alternatives to Buying Gifts This Holiday Season

Instead of spending money this year, why not try this....



Give to Others:

- * Sponsor a local family's holiday.
- * Donate your time to local organizations.
- * Donate money; no matter how little you give, it makes a difference.



Gifts for Children:

- * Give the makings for hand puppets, jewelry or something you like.
- * Give a box of dress up clothes; use some old clothes you are planning to donate
- * Upside-Down Day: Let kids set the day's agenda (with parental supervision). Take off your watch, wear pajamas under your coat to the movies or eat dessert for breakfast.
- * Teach a child a craft. Create a coupon for a "free day" with you.
- * Write and illustrate a story with the child as the main character.

Homemade Gifts:

- * A booklet of your favorite memories related to a friend or loved one.
- * A cookbook with your favorite recipes; include some of your favorite cookies.
- * Set up a monthly lunch date or phone call; this is a perfect gift for elderly friends or relatives.
- * A monthly care basket; this works really well for those who spend most of the year in separate places. Over the holidays send them their first basket of muffins or banana bread for January, and then each month of the year, send something new to go with the theme of that month.
- * The gift of art: for grandparents, a framed picture drawn by a grandchild is the perfect present.
- * Make your own cards and send them to relatives and good friends.
- * Make your own calendar using cut-out pictures, photos, and/or drawings.



Gifts of Time:

- * Special activities with a significant other--a candlelit dinner, massage, or outdoor activity.
- * A monthly lunch date with an elderly relative or friend.
- * Gift coupons/certificates: Dinner and a movie, a home-cooked meal, a car wash, a day of babysitting, leaf raking, snow shoveling, etc.
- * Reconnect with someone; call an estranged friend or write a letter to someone you haven't seen in a few years.
- * Surprise someone by shoveling their snow; even if you remain anonymous, it will make their holiday season.
- * Offer to teach someone a skill you have.

Family Gifts:



- * A jigsaw puzzle for the whole family.
- * Set up a family tournament in your favorite card game whether it is Gin Rummy, Hearts, Spades, War, Go Fish, Twenty-One, Speed, Spit, Uno, etc.
- * Tickets to a favorite cultural or sporting event
- * A family hike, game of capture the flag, tag, or hide-and-go-seek.

Donations in the name of a Loved One:

- * Have a tree planted in someone's honor; take a look at American Forests' website for more information.
- * Give a donation to a local cause such as a soup kitchen, a shelter for battered women, a local environment group, etc.
- * Give a friend a membership to a non-profit organization. JustGive.org allows you to donate online to thousands of charities.



Re-gifting without Guilt

- * Re-gift: Although many people view this as a way of getting rid of junk, when articles in good condition are passed on, it saves space in your closet and the landfill.
- * Share the love of reading. Give away the last great book you bought.
- * Shop thrift stores in your area or online.

Gift Swaps

- * Cookie Swaps: Share recipes and go home with a variety of cookies.
- * Name Drawing: Each member of your family/group of friends buys/makes only one gift, for the name drawn from a hat.
- * White Elephant gift exchange--a great way to reuse items you aren't using yourself.

Tips for Going Green This Holiday Season:

Make your own cards from recycled paper.

Avoid using names tags (stickers), ribbons, bows and tape, which are not always recyclable, and opt for reusing old Christmas cards (use pinking sheers to fancy up the edges), gift bags, or nice boxes which are eco-friendly.



Save gift bags and boxes and reuse them year to year.

Buy renewable energy credits: Credits help offset the environmental costs of our energy needs by funding renewable energy sources, like wind and solar power, elsewhere on the grid.

Here's where you can find out more: <http://www.newdream.org/marketplace/carbon.php>

Take a friend off junk mail lists; take a look at <http://www.41pounds.org/> or <http://mailstopper.tonic.com/>

Buy a potted Christmas tree and replant after the holidays.

Alternative gift fairs, which are often held by churches during the holiday season, offer a chance to channel some of your holiday gift dollars to good causes. This is a good opportunity to purchase fair trade coffee, tea and chocolate, which are produced using environmentally sound methods. If you missed the fair in your area, check out the Conscious Consumer Marketplace for online giving options.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS