



## Trimming our Holiday “Wasteline”

To many, the holiday season is “the most wonderful time of the year,” but for those in the garbage disposal business it is also the busiest time of the year due to the increase in trash generation resulting from holiday festivities. In fact, in the period between Thanksgiving and New Year's, American households generate 25% more waste. That's about 1 million extra tons of trash each year, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Thankfully, there are many simple and easy things that people can do to reduce the amount of trash they generate during the holiday season. The suggestions found below allow for full enjoyment of the holidays, but at the same time will help you to reduce your environmental footprint this holiday season.

### **Give experiences:**

Many people have more belongings than they have time or space to enjoy. Give a gift experience this year instead of a traditional gift:

- Language, sports, or music lessons
- Admission to a museum or exhibition, or tickets to a play
- Membership to a club or association
- Health spa gift certificate
- On-line magazine subscription
- Park passes and fishing licenses
- Transit passes and tickets

For kids, the gift of your time will be appreciated:

- A day at a national park
- A trip to the circus
- Dinner out for his/her favorite food
- A movie

### **Give investments:**

Most gifts don't last long, but investments do, especially for babies too young to appreciate gifts.

- Start a 529 college savings plan. Visit [www.savingforcollege.com](http://www.savingforcollege.com)
- Give U.S. savings bonds. Visit [www.savingsbonds.gov](http://www.savingsbonds.gov)
- Open an Education IRA with a broker or financial planner.

Convinced you must give a real, solid, wrapped gift?

- Give a gift certificate. The recipient will get only what he/she wants.
- Buy durable items that will last many years, such as bicycles, tools, a live tree, or quality kitchenware.
- Let a child's mind "grow into" the toy. Choose toys that challenge: musical instruments, art supplies, tools, chess sets.
- Buy pre-owned items. A thrift shop or flea market may have the perfect gift.
- Buy goods with recycled content.
- Cut out the snail-mail with e-greetings.
- Wrap a gift in a scarf, tote, backpack, toolbox or bucket that becomes part of the gift. Or use the increasingly popular paper gift bags.
- As people open gifts, collect the wrapping paper and recycle it, if it is accepted by your local recycling program. (Be sure no small toy parts or plastic wrappings are tossed into the recycling bag).
- Buy a live tree, and plant it.

**After the holidays:**

- You might find that you have older things that you no longer need now that you have received new gifts or you may have received gifts you just don't want. Call and find out what your local charities and non-profit organizations need. Remember, giving to charitable organizations tends to drop off after the holidays, so keep these organizations in mind.
- All those catalogs you ordered, to help with shopping, just keep coming and coming. The average American receives more than 500 pieces of junk mail each year. That's about a tree for every household. Call the ordering number on the back of the catalog and have them stop delivery.
- Recycle your tree. Programs will be listed in the newspaper or announced on local radio.
- Bring used polystyrene packaging peanuts and other polystyrene packing materials to a local mailing center so that they can be reused.
- Join an item swapping club, such as Freecycle ([www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)) to keep usable items out of landfills.

And, of course, don't forget to recycle all those pre-holiday catalogs, corrugated boxes, and cans and bottles from holiday get-togethers!

**For more holiday waste reduction (and recycling) ideas, as well as waste reduction strategies that can be used year-round, visit:**

Focus on Food Waste...How to Reduce Food Waste at Home! -

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/dshw/recycling/Foodwaste.pdf>

"Greening the Season" (USEPA) - <http://www3.epa.gov/region09/waste/recycling/index.html>

Reducing our Global Holiday Footprint - <https://nerc.org/nerc-blog/2012/12/11/reducing-our-global-holiday-footprint/>

6 Eco-Friendly Gift Wrap Alternatives - <http://inhabitat.com/6-eco-friendly-gift-wrap-alternatives/>

Electronics Donation and Recycling - <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/electronics-donation-and-recycling> and <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/dshw/ewaste/index.html>

[www.ecomall.com](http://www.ecomall.com)

[www.greenhotels.com](http://www.greenhotels.com)

[www.realgoods.com](http://www.realgoods.com)

[www.globalstewards.org/index.htm](http://www.globalstewards.org/index.htm)

Updated: 11/17

Contact: Steven Rinaldi, NJDEP, Bureau of Energy and Sustainability, 609-633-0538,  
[Steven.Rinaldi@dep.nj.gov](mailto:Steven.Rinaldi@dep.nj.gov)