

Checklist for a Lighter Holiday

Save money, protect natural resources, prevent trash and clutter, and enjoy being creative in the spirit of the season.

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's, Americans generate about 1 million extra tons of trash **per week**. A lot of this extra tonnage is packaging, boxes, gift wrap, and left over food. There are many ways to prevent garbage and preserve resources while still enjoying the holidays. Check off and try out the ideas you like.

Gift Possibilities

Some people are giving up gift exchanges altogether to avoid the commercial focus of the holidays. Many people still enjoy giving gifts. Here's help for choosing desirable gifts that are earth-friendly. Consider:

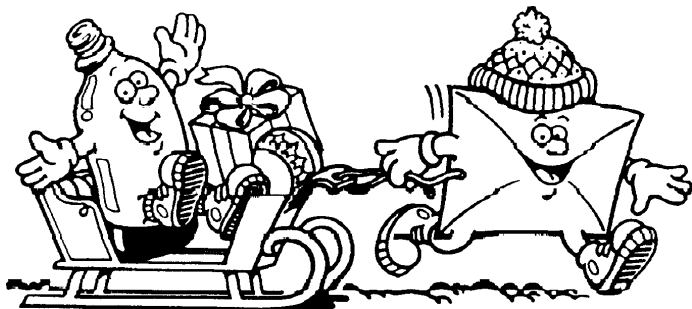
- Loving thoughtful choices mean more than how much something costs.
- Who do you really want to give gifts to? Avoid pressure and habit while remembering loved ones.
- What gift will they really use and appreciate?

— **Waste free:** Make your own gift certificates for experiences (movie, concert, play tickets, lunch, zoo pass) or services (babysitting, lawn mowing, dishwashing with a "no complaint" warranty). Snohomish County has free blank certificates for you to use. Call 425-388-3425, press "0."

— **Consumable (no trash or clutter left over):** Give candles, soap, note cards, or food like special jams or homemade cookies. Invite someone over for a home-prepared meal.

— **Durable:** Choose well-made classic items, such as long lasting toys, sports equipment, clothing, books, cooking or building tools, rather than cheap, breakable, trendy stuff. Also, think "repairable."

— **Environmentally helpful:** Give canvas shopping bags, travel cups, garden hand tools, durable lunch bags, worm or compost bins, compost, gift certificates for a nursery or nature excursion, cloth napkins and rings. Avoid battery-dependent toys and tools as much as possible, or provide rechargeables and a recharger.



— **Personal touch:** Your own artwork, photographs, poems, craftwork, and/or a note expressing love and appreciation are usually a big hit. Parents and grandparents, among others, usually keep them forever!

— **Donations:** Give money to a good cause that the other person cares about, in their name. Animal shelters, environmental organizations, food banks, literacy advocates, libraries, social service and shelters for teens and women, and arts organizations are just a few possibilities.

— **Reuse/Recycle:** Choose something special that belongs to you and pass it along, possibly with a note sharing its story (jewelry, books, CDs, blankets, stuffed animals, toys, tools etc.) When buying new items, check for post-consumer recycled content (paper products, garden hoses, compost & worm bins, etc.). Choose minimal and recyclable packaging.

Money-saving, creative tip: Thrift stores are a great source of baskets, scarves, tin boxes, beads (from old necklaces), picture frames, magazines, fabric, and many other items for crafts, gifts, and gift wrap.


Snohomish County Public Works
Solid Waste Management

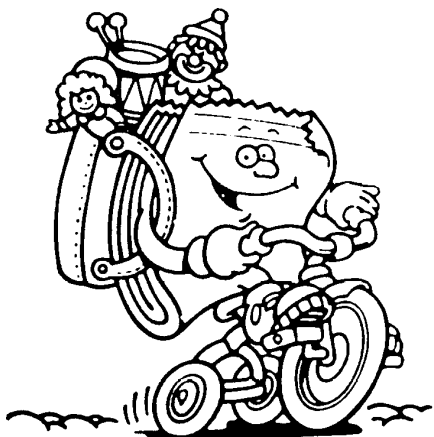
425-388-3425, press "0" or 1-800-562-4367, ext 3425, "0"

Preventing Food Waste

Special treats and festive meals add to our enjoyment of the holidays. But when we throw food away, we waste the many resources used to produce it, and money. Much of the 28 billion pounds of edible food thrown away each year in the U.S. is wasted during this season. (source: *U.L.S. Report, 1995*). Food waste is a big part of our garbage! It's also the time of year when some people are challenged for basic survival, including having enough food to eat.

Here are some ideas:

- ___ Plan menus and food quantities that truly reflect the eating choices of your party. For instance, many people no longer want lots of sweets. And more people are choosing vegetarian. Be a thoughtful host.
- ___ When the party's over, store food carefully so it doesn't spoil. Track it and use it up.
- ___ Send extra food home with guests who will appreciate this added taste of the holidays.
- ___ Make soup from the turkey bones. Freeze it and enjoy for the long winter months.
- ___ Some organizations will gladly accept food leftovers, provided you deliver it fresh. Call around your community in advance to see who is willing to receive the leftovers from your party.
- ___ Choose local produce to support your local farmers, and pesticide-free products for soil, water and human health.
- ___ Use durable cloth napkins and tablecloths and real plates and tableware to prevent paper/plastic waste.
- ___ If you need more tableware, consider renting it instead of buying disposables. Cost competitive!
- ___ Reuse and recycle food containers and packaging as much as possible.
- ___ Compost food scraps. See the brochure list on the next page.



Gift Wrap-Reuse

- ___ Old calendar pages (beautiful!)
- ___ Old maps
- ___ Old greeting cards for decoration or tags
- ___ Lightly used paper/tissue/bows (save!)
- ___ Used gift bags or baskets
- ___ Used scarves, cloth napkins, pillow slips
- ___ Paper bags decorated by you
- ___ Used tin boxes and shoe boxes
- ___ Yarn or raffia instead of ribbon or bows

Fun Reuse Craft Ideas

*Request directions from the Snohomish County Solid Waste Management Division

- ___ *Make attractive envelopes using magazine pictures and labels.
- ___ Collage small magazine pictures on plain note cards to create unique and lovely cards.
- ___ *Make origami boxes from old calendar pages.
- ___ *Make beautiful beads from magazine pictures (Check out [Likeable Recyclables](#) from the Division, and turn to "Op-Art Beads.")
- ___ Turn trimmed old cards and calendar pictures into gift tags or bookmarks. (Laminate if desired.)

Other Holiday Waste Prevention Ideas

- ___ Carry durable shopping bags to the store.
- ___ If you drive, accomplish multiple errands in one trip.
- ___ Reduce advertising mail and catalogues. See brochure list.
- ___ If packaging is required, choose minimal, reusable, recyclable.
- ___ Walk in nature and take in the season.
- ___ String popcorn with friends.
- ___ Help with a community/school service project.
- ___ Make or bake gifts and decorations.
- ___ Pamper yourself with a bath or read a book by the fire.
- ___ If practical, choose a living Christmas tree.
- ___ Chip and compost a "cut" tree, after the season. (No tinsel or flocking.)

Solid Waste Management Library Resources

Free loan available to residents of and people working in Snohomish County, by mail or in person.

Two week limit (one week during December). Renewal possible, if no holds. Call 425-388-3425, press "0."

Books

- Hundred Dollar Holiday by Bill McKibben.
Small beautiful book, including the history of the American Christmas and how to minimize materialism. Christian-based but pertinent for all.
- Simplify Your Christmas by Elaine St. James.
Highly readable, inspiring brief essays offering "100 ways to reduce the stress and recapture the joy of the holidays."
- The Simple Living Guide by Janet Luhrs. Comprehensive "sourcebook for less stressful, more joyful living." Includes substantial chapter on reinventing the holidays. Refers to multiple traditions.
- Unplug the Christmas Machine by Jo Robinson & Jean Coppock Staeheli. Classic "complete guide to putting love & joy back into the season."
- What Kids Really Want That Money Can't Buy by Betsy Taylor, Founder and President of the Center for a New American Dream. Illuminating book with fine chapter on the holidays.

Videos

Not holiday-specific, but thought-provoking regarding over-consumption and garbage

- "Affluenza" Bullfrog Films. Humorous, thought-provoking vignettes and information on over-consumption.
- "Escape from Affluenza" Bullfrog Films. Sequel featuring families making choices to reduce consumption.
- "The Cost of Cool" The Video Project. Challenging look at "Youth, Consumption, & the Environment." Suitable for middle school, high school, and adults. Features real teens examining the issues.
- "Think Twice" Video Project. 7-minute film made by teens in response to "The Cost of Cool." A hard-hitting and confronting look at over-consumption.
- "The Rotten Truth" Children's Television Workshop. Entertaining and informative for all ages. A look at garbage, recycling, and waste prevention.
- "Where Does Our Garbage Go" See how the Snohomish County system works.

Free Brochures (Please indicate quantity)

- Advertising Mail Overwhelming You?
Find out how to reduce unwanted mail. Ask for the postcards too.
- Art and Hobby Supplies A fact sheet to help you prevent hazardous exposure to chemicals commonly found in art and hobby supplies while you enjoy making crafts and gifts.
- Checklist for a Lighter Holiday More copies of this same list. (You are welcome to photocopy it, too)
- Composting Food Scraps Here's what to do with those food scraps when the party's over.
- Free Brochures List Provides the full order form for brochures available from the Division on composting, recycling, where to get rid of stuff, healthy lawn care, reducing chemical use, and more.
- Gift Certificate A lovely blank gift certificate for you to fill in with a gift of service or time or hugs!
- Hazardous Waste Drop-Off Station
Cleaning out for the New Year?
Where to take the stuff and when.
- How to be a Salmon Friendly Gardener A list of native plants when choosing gifts for your gardener.
- Lighten Up Your Holiday! Brochure outlines some principles for waste-free holidays.
- Pledges of Commitment Great for classroom, church, or group to promote action steps beyond talk.
- Safer Cleaning Products Keep yourself healthy while cleaning the house for the holiday.
- Take it Back Network Got a new computer? What to do with the old? Here's what.
- Where to Donate (and Buy) Your Used Goods A guide to Snohomish County charities and thrift stores.
- Waste Prevention & Recycling are Easier What, where and how to recycle.

Websites

www.newdream.org Download the guide "Simplify the Holidays" and explore many aspects of this great website from the Center for a New American Dream. Includes buying recycled and reducing consumption.

My Holiday List



I will do something fun and nourishing that makes the holidays special for me:



I will reduce garbage and preserve resources by:



A fun earth-friendly gift idea I want to try is:



A fun alternative reuse gift wrap I will experiment with is:



I want to remember to:



*Thanks for preventing garbage, being creative,
and conserving natural resources.
Please do reuse and recycle as much as possible,
instead of dumping in the trash.
Enjoy your holidays!*