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## An Eco Guide to the Holidays

With the holiday season approaching, many people will be having fun with friends and family and enjoying the merry season! The holidays are a time of excess; excess fun, excess food, and unfortunately, excess waste.

According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, household waste increases by more than 25 percent between late November and early January, and the result is over one million more tons per week in landfills across North America. This comes from extra food waste (up to 40 percent of holiday food is wasted), packaging and trashed old items replaced with gifted newer versions. The Center for Global Development further found that holiday lights use around 6.6 billion kilowatt hours of electricity per year and that increased travel during the season significantly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, a cause of climate change.

This holiday, why not try to reduce your environmental footprint? Let's work to keep this time of year as green as the trees! Here are some tips for you to incorporate during the season:

### Gifts

- **Homemade** products are more personalized and sustainable! Get creative and knit, build, create art, or bake.
- **Give experiences**, instead of things: movie/concert tickets, spa treatments, restaurant vouchers, gym memberships, etc.
- Buy products of **good quality**, to last longer. Also look for energy-efficient, recyclable, or made of post-consumer content products, such as reusable bags or water bottles.
- **Donate** to a nonprofit organization in the name of your loved one and support an important cause.
- Try **regifting**, if you know the person would appreciate it.
- **Shop sustainably**. Avoid choosing rush delivery when shopping online, which





more transportation demand. If shopping in person, combine trips and make sure to bring your reusable bags.

- Send **e-cards** instead of paper.

### Wrapping and decorating

- **Avoid mass-produced** wrapping paper, which is mostly not recyclable.
- Wrap with **old newspaper, flyers, maps, and artwork**.
- **Avoid plastic ribbons and glitter**. Try decorating your gifts with paint and markers.
- Wrap gifts with **reusable cloths** or in **cloth bags**.
- Choose a **potted tree** that can be replanted outside or try to find a tree from an **organic farm**. Fake plastic trees, while reusable, are ultimately more harmful than natural trees.

### Food

- Instead of foil or plastic wrap, choose **reusable glassware or beeswax food wrap**.
- Choose **local, seasonal food** when possible.
- **Reduce your consumption of meat**, or buy local and ethical.
- Buy in **bulk** to reduce extra packaging.
- Use **less disposable** utensils, glasses, and plates.

### Energy

- Use **LED holiday lights**, which use 80% less energy and last 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs. Check for the Energy Star symbol.
- **Turn off decorations** at night or use a timer to automate the process.

Happy holidays!

References:

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