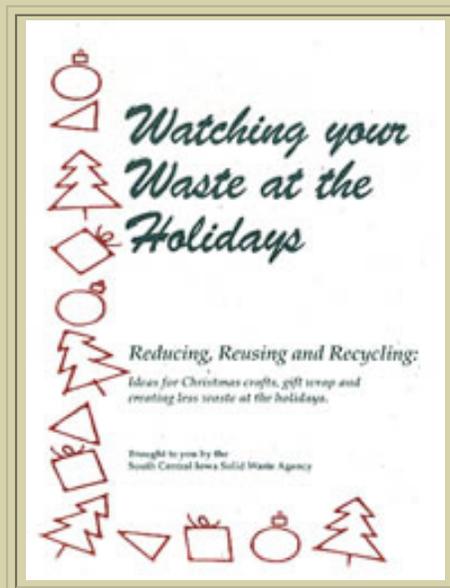


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Introduction

A Time to Waste (not)

The holiday season is a time of celebrating and giving. It is also a time of increased waste production. Buying gifts, wrapping gifts, sending holiday cards and preparing meals all add to the waste stream. But with a little creativity, reducing holiday waste can not only save you money and help preserve our environment, it can also provide enjoyable activities for you and your whole family.

Holiday Shopping

The first step in reducing waste at the holiday season is to take care when shopping. Buying items with **less packaging** when you can is the first step. It's also better to buy in bulk when you can. And remember to **buy products that can be recycled** whenever possible.

Buying durable, reusable items rather than disposable goods is probably one of the most important things you can do to reduce waste. If you must buy disposable cups and dishes, try to use paper rather than plastic or styrofoam.

Buy Recycled

You often hear about the 3 R's of waste management: reduce, reuse and recycle. One of the most important things you can do is to think about the 4th R - **re-buy**. Recycling will only work if we buy recycled products. The easiest way to do that at the Holidays is to look for Christmas and other holiday cards that contain recycled content. Buy products that have the highest content of **post-consumer** waste possible. If you can't find recycled products to buy, ask store managers to start stocking them.

A Family Affair

Finding creative uses for old containers and other products and creating original wrapping paper can be an enjoyable leisure time activity for people of all ages. Kids can be incredibly creative once you start talking about using old items to make crafts and ornaments. And many experienced crafters are among the best recyclers. Holiday recycling can become a challenge to your creativity, which has no bounds!

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Paper

Following are some ideas for using paper products for Christmas crafts and decorations. You are limited only by your imagination as to the things you can create from paper products.

Snowman Ornament

This ornament is a good way to use up junk mail envelopes. The idea comes from *The Imagination Factory*, an excellent resource by Marilyn Brackney. (Web site is located at: <http://www.kid-at-art.com/>)

To make the snowman cut 3 strips of paper out of white scrap paper. Envelopes work very well for this. The strip for the head should be 1 inch wide by 4 inches long. Cut the middle piece 1.25 inches wide by 5 inches long. And finally, the bottom should measure 1.5 inches wide by 6 inches long.



Take each strip, roll it into a circle and glue. Then glue all the circles together. To make the eyes, mouth and buttons, either glue on scrap pieces of black paper or use a black marker (or paint). To make the nose, cut a small, narrow triangle, fold over the base and glue to the face. For the scarf, cut a narrow strip of paper and fringe the ends. You can decorate the scarf using markers, paint or scrap paper. Glue the scarf around the neck.

To make the hat, cut a circle for the brim 1.5 inches in diameter (using a compass is helpful) out of scrap paper. Cut a strip of matching paper 1.25 inches wide by 3.5 inches long. Make a cylinder and glue. Next, glue the cylinder to the circle and glue the hat to the snowman's head. You may also glue a small circle to fit on the top of the hat if you wish.

To make the arms, glue two small twigs to the front of the middle piece. You could use paper for these if you like. If you would like to add a broom, you can roll up a small piece of brown paper, fringe the ends and glue it to the snowman's hand.

Finally, glue a small piece of cotton on the bottom as snow. You can use cotton from medicine bottles. Or talk to your local pharmacist and ask him or her to save cotton for you. Glue a looped length of cord, ribbon or thread to the back of the snowman so you can hang it on your Christmas tree. Or you can glue it on a package for decoration.

Marilyn Brackney -- the Imagination Factory.

Reducing Junk Mail

Waste Prevention World reports that 418,000 tons of bulk mail was thrown away unopened in 1990 in the U. S. They suggest calling or writing companies directly and asking to be placed in their "suppress" file or taken off their mailing lists. See their web site at: <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WPW/Home/junkmail.htm>

Another site: <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs4-junk.htm>

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Recycling Christmas Cards

Old Christmas cards are a great source for recycled Christmas crafts. You can make ornaments, post cards, place mats or wrapping paper. We'll talk more about that in the Gift Wrap section.



Christmas Card Ornament: One of the simplest, yet most elegant ornaments to make, consists of merely cutting out part of a card, punching a hole at the top and stringing a gold or other metallic thread or cord through the hole to hang it on the tree.

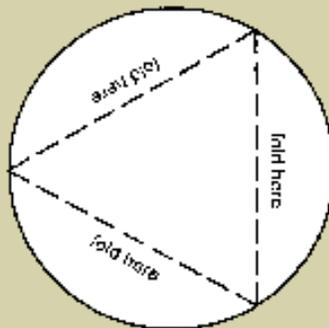
Use your favorite, most beautiful cards. You can also embellish the cards with various decorations such as raffia or ribbons. For larger cards, use wire attached at two places to better support the card.

Christmas Card Ball: This ball ornament is a great way to use old cards. It consists of 20 small

circles glued together on three sides.

The circles can be any size. For a finished ornament that is between three and four inches wide, use a circle pattern that has a diameter of approximately 1 3/4 to 2 inches.

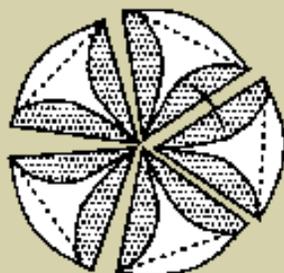
Cut out 20 circles making sure the centerpoints of the images are in the center of the circle. Fold the circles to make three equal sides (along fold lines in the pattern below).



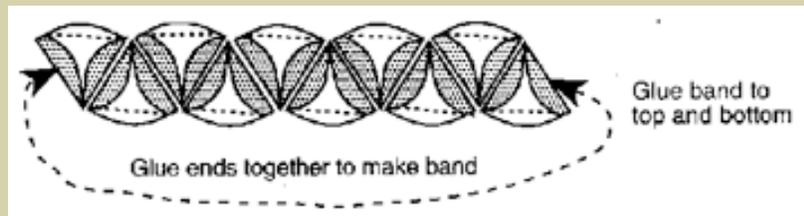
To assemble:

1. Glue 5 circles together along 2 sides for the top of the ball.
2. Glue another 5 circles together along 2 sides for the bottom.
3. Glue 10 circles together along 2 sides to make a band to go in between top and bottom.
4. Glue top and bottom to center band.
5. Thread cord or metallic thread through holes that you have made on the top of the ornament (it might be helpful to use a large needle to thread it) for a hanger. Or use an ornament hanger or paper clip.

Glue circles together: Glue 5 circles together to make tops and bottoms:



Glue 10 circles together like this:



Putting this together can be confusing, but once you start working with the circles, you will figure it out. You can also make holes along the outer edges of all the circles and use yarn or decorative thread to edge it

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Gift Box Ornaments

You can make a very simple ornament by covering a tiny box with scrap wrapping paper and ribbon. You can either make your own box from heavy paper or paper board or you can cut down boxes used for packaging.



In the ornament shown here, we used a cough syrup box. Cut the box to make a square and wrap. You can reuse leftover ribbon, tie it around the box and make a loop at the top to hang it from the tree.

This can also be a great way to get kids involved. Have them color, paint or draw on scrap office paper and use that to wrap the box. The possibilities of ways to wrap boxes is unlimited!

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Cardboard Cut-outs

Scrap cardboard, matte board or other heavy paper can be used to make simple ornaments that can be decorated any way your imagination lets you. Find different shapes for your ornaments by looking through magazines, craft books and Christmas cards. Or use cookie cutters. For an even better effect, draw shapes freehand.

Another good source for shapes and designs is clip art. You can use designs from clip art books and enlarge or reduce the size by using a copying machine.

There are also many good clip art designs for computers, either as programs you can purchase or designs you can download off the internet. See the resource section of this publication for internet sites.

Once you have your designs you can decorate them in any number of ways: painting or coloring; spray painting, gluing decorations onto the cardboard; gluing fabric on the ornament or using an iron-on material; wrapping them with decorative wire; or using papier-mache' techniques.



Shown here are a Christmas tree painted in green and gold and a Santa star painted (on both sides) and trimmed with cotton or felt. The Santa is painted either with

brush or a sponge and his face is painted in a flesh tone. Scrap cotton from medicine bottles can be used for the beard and mustache. A ribbon or cord can be glued on the back of the ornament to hang or holes can be punched in the top. Or for ornaments that are wide, string ribbon or cord from two ends and tie each on a small twig.

Popular magazines and craft or quilting magazines or books are good sources for ideas. Think about how you can take their ideas and adapt them so you can use scrap materials that you already have.

Click for [Santa](#) ornament design.

The Santa pattern is adapted from an idea in *Home for Christmas*, by Nancy J. Martin and Sharon Stanley, printed by That Patchwork Place, PO Box 118, Bothell, WA 98041-0118, 1991.

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Gift Wrap

Using Your Creative Genius

The easiest way to use leftover materials and to reduce waste is by making your own gift wrap. Not only is it a great way to re-use many common things around your home, it also saves money on expensive gift wraps and allows you to put your creative mind to work. And making gift wrap can involve the whole family.

Gift wrap and decorations are not limited to just paper either. Fabric, bubble wrap, lace, towels, dried fruit and flowers, buttons, pine cones -- you name it -- it can be used.

Paper It

When it comes to paper for wrapping gifts, almost anything goes. Some things you can use include:

- any kind of paper sack
- brown paper bags
- magazines
- newsprint (especially comics or sports sections. Also, you could ask your local newspaper if they have ends of newsprint rolls.)
- school papers
- calenders
- wallpaper
- maps
- tissue paper

If you want to decorate the paper sponge to dab on paint. Metallic acrylic paints - gold, silver and copper - can really make a distinctive-looking gift (Use a metallic ribbon or bow to match or contrast the paint).

Using nature: For a natural look, wrap boxes in brown paper from grocery bags. Use jute or raffia as ribbon. For bows, use pine cones, dried leaves, dried flowers, berries, pine twigs, dried fruit, cinnamon sticks, etc.



Helpful Hint: To dry flowers, use silica gel (found in craft stores) or try mixing borax with corn meal (Experiment with ratios).

Borax is also used a less toxic alternative to many household cleaners and disinfectants.

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Bag It

You can recycle sacks of all kinds to make gift bags. And these bags in turn can also be used over and over by the people you give gifts to. This is also a great project for kids.

Many bags you get may have printing or pictures on them. Just cover the printing with green and/or red paper (or even use nontraditional colors) that can be used as a background for however you decide to decorate your bag. This would be a great way



to use up those red and green Holiday letters folks send out with their cards. We covered the name of a dress shop on their bag with a piece of construction paper and then glued Christmas cards on the bag (bag in upper right hand corner of photo). This sturdy bag will be used over and over.

You could also use scrap fabric to cover up printing on the bags. Cut the fabric with pinking shears and glue on to the sack. You could glue cut-out designs from other scraps of fabric or use leftover pieces of trim and ribbon to make designs.

To make a bag with handles, cut the sack to the size you want allowing several inches at the top for a "hem". Fold over the top. Cut small holes only on the inside flap where you will want to attach handles. To make sturdy handles, use twisted paper (don't untwist it), cut it to the proper length, insert the ends through the holes and using a glue gun, glue them in-between the flap and inside of the bag. You can also use twine, cord or ribbon for handles.

Decorate the bag by gluing on Holiday cards, painting directly on the bag or by cutting out patterns from scrap paper, magazines, wallpaper, fabric or felt. Foil-lined envelopes can be used to make great stars and other decorations. Think about other things you can glue on: raffia, buttons, ribbon, trim, lace, dried flowers, pine cones, etc.

Reuse tissue paper to line the sacks if you wish. Don't forget about tissue paper found in shoe boxes or in clothing packaging. You also may decorate the tissue paper by painting it. This works particularly well with water colors.

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Box It

Making reusable gift boxes from old boxes can be fun and as well as a creative challenge. Some boxes can be directly painted on, some can be covered with paper or fabric or you can make your own box out of patterned cardboard or paper board scrap.

An easy idea is to make a decoupage using Christmas cards. Glue cards on in an interesting pattern - folding the cards over the sides of the box and gluing makes an interesting design. Pictured here is a theme box for cat lovers made from Christmas cards featuring cats. Stars have been cut out of foil-lined envelopes and glued randomly around the box. You could add a ribbon tied with a cat toy to make the gift complete.

Paint can be used in a variety of ways. On the box pictured here, the design is simply a graphic that has been blown up and traced onto the box. Or you can draw designs freehand. Among the designs on the box you can paint the recipient's name making it a very special and personalized gift.



Using stamping techniques is also a quick and easy way to decorate your boxes. You can use a regular pre-made stamp or make your own using a sponge or if you're adventurous, cutting a pattern on a potato that's been sliced in half. Other vegetables will work as stamps too. For instance, cut a cauliflower floret in half, dip it in paint and stamp designs on the box (or paper). Anything with an interesting texture or design will work. Experiment and go crazy!

Stencils also make a great way to decorate. Find a sheet of plastic (we used an old page/report cover) and simply cut out a design. Sponge paint over the stencil.

As in the other gift wrapping ideas, use nature in your creation. Glue dried flowers, fruit, pine cones, leaves, cinnamon sticks, or any other "natural" item you can think of.

Helpful Hint #2: To dry fruit, cut thin slices (oranges, lemons, limes, apples work the best) and place on a cookie sheet in the oven at 150 to 200 degrees for three to six hours. Times will vary, so you will have to experiment.

Helpful Hint #3: To keep dried flowers intact, spray them with some kind of acrylic finish or other preservative.

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Metal

The Versatile Tin Can

Tin cans are actually made of 99 percent steel with a thin coat of tin to help prevent rusting. According to the EarthWorks Group's *The Recycler's Handbook*, Americans use enough steel and tin cans every day to make a pipe running from Los Angeles to New York and back.

Gift containers: Tin cans are great for creating crafts and especially for gift containers for candy or other goodies. Every Christmas, the waste haulers at the South Central Iowa Solid Waste Agency landfill receive a can full of nuts and candy.



To make these cans, simply spray paint them with green, red or gold paint. You may need to use a couple coats. Drill holes in the top on two sides for wire handles (or use twine). You can decorate using almost anything. Christmas cards work great. Cut out parts of cards and glue to the can. Use raffia to tie around the can or on the handle. Or you can use scraps of fabric, ribbon or jute twine. Use a sponge and dab acrylic craft paint over the can. Gold, copper and white paint work best. You can also glue buttons or bows on the cans as well.

Tin can lid ornaments: The ends of cans make great ornaments also. Adult supervision is needed if using sharp ends of can lids. Juice can ends are better suited for children. *Arts and Crafts' Christmas Craft Preview* magazine suggested using ends of cans, wrapping them with foil tape (found in stained glass stores) and folding them over pictures (from Christmas cards, magazines, etc.) that have been glued on the lid. Drill a hole in the top of the ornament. String gold thread through the hole to use as a hanger.



Juice can lids can also be painted or you can glue fabric, felt or other decorations on them. For a hanger, you can also glue a loop of ribbon or twine to the back of the lid.

Luminaries: All kinds of cans could be used to make luminaries: coffee cans, paint cans or any size or shape can. Spray paint the cans any color you want. Fill can with water and freeze. The easiest way to make patterns on the can is to either draw or trace a pattern or find a graphic, blow it up on a copy machine and tape the paper to the can or fasten with a rubber band. Using a nail or punch, hammer a series of holes to make the design. Place a candle in the can, and you're set to go.

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Fun With Flashing

Flashing is used in roofing to keep water from seeping in around chimneys and other seams on houses. It's usually made from aluminum, galvanized steel or copper. Scrap pieces can also make interesting ornaments, wreaths or other decorations.

Working with flashing is definitely an adult project. You can use tin snips or other shears to cut the metal. **But be very careful of the sharp edges.**

For decorations, cut out stars, trees or long narrow strips for icicles. You can use hole punches, nails, almost anything to create designs on the ornaments. Also, you could wrap silver or gold wire around the ornaments or make a garland using small cut-out designs and wire. Let your imagination go wild!

Wire Garlands

An easier way to make recycled garlands is to simply glue shapes onto copper, silver or gold wire. You can cut out designs, such as stars, boxes, circles or trees, from paper board, paint them and glue back to back on the wire. Use old cereal or shoe boxes or any heavier card stock. Paint them with acrylic paints or glitter. Again, be creative - use pastel colors for the designs. Or use metallic paints. If you didn't want to use wire, you could use twine or cord. You can use the patterns printed here or make up your own.

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Plastic

Potato Chip Gift Bag

Potato chip and other snack bags are usually made of cellophane or other non-recyclable plastic. You can make a great gift bag out of an old chip bag by turning it inside out, washing it off, folding the top over and gluing it. Use a decorative ribbon to tie it shut, and you have a beautiful, shiny gift bag! This idea is contained in *Trash to Treasure - The Recycler's Guide to Creative Crafts*.



Styrofoam Dove Ornament



To make this dove ornament, use an old styrofoam food container, cut out the pattern below and insert wing through slit in body. Use a marker to make the eyes and hang it with a decorative thread through a hole in the dove's back. It works best to use a craft knife to cut out the styrofoam. An adult should help with cutting out the pattern.

Dove Pattern

Reprinted with permission by Educational Ministries, Inc., 165 Plaza Dr., Prescott, AZ 86303. Taken from: *Creative Ideas for Advent, Vol. 1*, p. 58.

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Glass

Using Glass for Crafts

Old bottles and jars can be recycled into candleholders, vases, gift containers for goodies or anything else you can think of. These bottles and jars can be decorated using special glass paints that can be purchased at craft and hobby stores. They can be decorated much the same as the other items we have talked about so far.

Another special way to decorate glass is by using etching cream (also available at your craft and hobby stores). Use self-adhesive contact plastic to either cut out stencils or to cut out designs around which the glass will be etched. Using etching cream is an adult activity. Follow manufacturer's directions for the etching cream.

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Resources

While the following is not a complete list of all sources out there with good information and ideas, these are some that we have used. Inclusion or exclusion of any publication is not an endorsement or rejection of any entity. We welcome any new resource information.

Magazines

Better Homes & Gardens Special Interest Publications: Holiday Celebrations

and *Christmas Ideas*

Arts & Crafts, Christmas craft preview

Crafts

Country Living

Woman's Day Special Interest Publications: Christmas Crafts

Books

Trash to Treasures- The Recycler's Guide to Creative Crafts, published by Leisure Arts, Inc., 5701 Ranch Drive, Little Rock, AR, 72212, 1996. Leisure Arts also publishes other good holiday craft books.

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South Central Iowa Solid Waste Agency | 1736 Hwy T-17 | Tracy, Iowa 50256
Phone: 641-828-8545 | Fax: 641-842-3722 | e-mail: landfill@sciswa.org