



Earth Gauge

A National Environmental Education Foundation Program

Reducing Holiday Waste

Americans generate 25 percent more waste during the Thanksgiving to New Year's period than other times of year. That's **five million tons** of extra garbage! By remembering the "three R's" this season – *reduce, reuse, recycle* – you can save water and energy while helping to lower the load in our landfills and protect natural resources.

ELECTRONICS

Are you gifting electronics this year? Americans power-up with about three billion dry-cell batteries every year, and waste from electronics accounts for about 70 percent of hazardous wastes found in our landfills. Batteries and electronics contain metals like nickel, aluminum, mercury, and lead. When these items end up in landfills, metals may vaporize into the air when burned or leach into groundwater and soils with rain water.



Reduce: Reduce the number of single-use batteries disposed of each year by giving rechargeable batteries a try. Rechargeables come in many shapes and sizes, and can power everything from stereos to cell phones and cars.

Reuse: Donate working electronics you no longer use to a charity, friends, or family members.

Recycle: Instead of putting batteries or electronics in the trash, take them to a local recycling center. Visit www.earth911.com to find a recycling center near you.

PAPER

'Tis the season for gift wrap, holiday cards, and other paper waste. About 35 percent of waste in our landfills is paper, and while paper makes up the biggest part of our waste stream, it is also the most-recovered recyclable. Recycling one ton of paper saves 7,000 gallons of water, 17 trees, three cubic yards of landfill space, and enough energy to power an average home for five months!

Reduce: Consider sending an e-card instead of a paper greeting card.

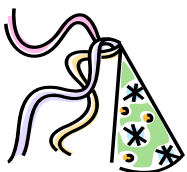
Reuse: Save this year's holiday cards – cut them up and use them as gift tags next year. Save gift wrap that is in good condition and reuse it next year. Save and reuse cardboard boxes, packing peanuts, and bubble wrap.

Recycle: Add greeting cards to your recycling bin. Unless they have glitter or foil on them, most cards can be included in mixed-paper recycling.



PARTIES

Are you hosting a holiday gathering? Put on a party that is fun and environmentally-friendly.



Reduce: If you have a big crowd coming over, drop the thermostat a few degrees to save energy – a room full of people can generate a lot of heat!

Reuse and Recycle: Instead of tossing plastic cups and plates after the festivities, wash and reuse them. If they can't be reused, recycle them – 95 percent less energy is used to make a plastic item from recycled materials than new materials. Compost food scraps.

HOLIDAY TREES

Fresh-cut trees are grown on Christmas tree farms, an acre of which provide the daily oxygen requirements for 18 people and contribute other benefits to the environment such as improving air and water quality. Each tree that is cut is replaced by up to three seedlings the next year. Although cut trees cannot be replanted, they can often be recycled or turned into compost. If you choose to buy a cut Christmas tree, find a local tree-cycling program at www.earth911.com/seasonal/green-your-holidays/. Recycled trees can provide garden mulch and wildlife habitat.



A Program of



National Environmental
Education Foundation

Knowledge to live by

Sources:

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