

11 Ways to Reduce your Holiday Carbon Footprint

The winter season is sprinkled with holidays, celebrations, gifts and delicious foods. It can also be wasteful. According to the EPA, [household waste in the U.S. increases 25 percent between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day](#), External link totaling about 1 million extra tons of waste. What can people concerned about their environmental footprint do to make seasonal celebrations more sustainable?

Here are 11 ways to reduce your emissions (and your guilt) this holiday season.

1. **Shop ahead to avoid next-day delivery.** Items shipped overnight require more packaging and jet fuel in order to reach their destination on time. By planning ahead, you can select ground transportation delivery options even if it takes a few more days.
2. **Turn down that thermostat.** Stay warm by wrapping yourself up in some cozy blankets or wearing sweaters. Warm your house up by opening your blinds to let sunlight in throughout the day, then closing them at night to keep the heat inside.
3. **Take an ecofriendly approach to holiday light displays.** Consider swapping out old lightbulbs for LEDs or solar lights, using a timer on both indoor and outdoor lights. If you're leaving for the night, turn off some of those lights and leave some cheer for the next day.
4. **Eat less red meat and dairy.** Instead, go for chicken or vegetarian meals. When possible, select produce that is in season.
5. **Reduce your food waste.** Though your initial reaction when encountering a holiday feast may be to heap your plate full of delicious treats, try starting with smaller portions and going back for seconds if you're still hungry. While cooking, make sure to compost as many food scraps as you can.
6. **Shop locally.** Choose locally produced foods and gifts in order to reduce transportation emissions. Local artisans and businesses will appreciate your patronage.
7. **Be an environmentally conscious gift wrapper.** Not all gift wrap is recyclable, so find a brand that is. Or, get creative by using recycled or DIY wrapping paper.
8. **Celebrate in (second hand) style.** Dressing up for a holiday party? Consider re-purposing older outfits or purchasing vintage or consignment goods rather than new clothes. Buying second hand clothes reduces manufacturing demands and keeps items out of the landfill by keeping them in circulation.
9. **Give gifts that promote sustainability.** Water bottles, garden supplies, a bicycle or solar-powered decorations all make great gifts for family and friends. More creative types can dive into a craft project that reuses things you have laying around your house.
10. **Bring your own bag.** Bring reusable bags on all gift shopping excursions, not just to the grocery store.
11. **Package up your decorations.** Rather than throwing your holiday paraphernalia away at the end of the season, save it for next year.

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