



University at Buffalo

Professional Staff Senate

University Shared Governance

## Sustainability Tips for the Holidays 2023

### Hosting or attending an event

- Avoid crowded, poorly ventilated, or fully enclosed indoor spaces. Increase ventilation by opening windows and doors to the extent that is feasible. [\(social\)](#)
- Consider getting vaccine booster if you are eligible to protect yourself and others. If you have a weakened immune system, even if vaccinated, use precautions recommended for unvaccinated people. [\(social\)](#)
- Consider who you are visiting with – if immunocompromised, unvaccinated, or elderly, increase precautions. [\(social\)](#)
- Do not forget about other viruses! RSV, pneumonia and flu. [\(social\)](#)
- Wear a mask if appropriate. [\(social\)](#)
- Avoid busy eating/shopping areas, during high volume times. [\(social, economic\)](#)

### Serving Guests: Keep safe around food and drinks

- Make sure everyone washes their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before and after preparing, serving, and eating food. Use hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol if soap and water are not available. [\(social, environmental\)](#)
- Wear a mask when preparing or serving food to others who don't live in your household. [\(social\)](#)
- Choose biodegradable plates, silverware, cups and napkins if using disposables. [\(environmental\)](#)

### Holiday Meals

- Consider a heritage breed turkey from a nearby farm or a free-range turkey. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Buy locally grown organic produce, cheese, baked goods and meat, from farmer's market, local chain or co-op. Locally produced jellies, jams and spreads are also available. Some are open all year and are within driving distance of UB! [\(environmental, economic\)](#)
- Bake your own Holiday cookies/breads, desserts with family/friends rather than purchasing. [\(environmental, social\)](#)

- Consider using an air fryer for food prep rather than oven. Healthier and less energy used. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Do not waste food by cooking too much.
- Use eco-friendly containers for leftovers [\(environmental\)](#)
- Choose a natural centerpiece. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Rather than bottled, use filtered tap water. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Eat organic. This means less pollution and is safer for humans and farm workers. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Compost food scraps. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Run only full dishwasher loads during cleanup. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Consider a meatless meal. [\(environment\)](#)
- Consider combining family events, rather than having separate events. [\(social\)](#)

## Gift Giving

- Select local gifts from nearby artisans or from consignment stores. [\(environmental, economic\)](#)
- Combine trips when shopping. Choose a few stores, rather than several. Shop close to home or online. [\(environmental, economic\)](#)
- Do not always buy new — buy something vintage. [\(environmental, economic\)](#)
- Select a gift of quality vs. quantity for a longer lifespan. [\(environmental, economic\)](#)
- Select gifts made of sustainable materials, with minimal or recycled packaging. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Choose a gift that teaches green — ex. gardening book with gardening tools. [\(environmental, social\)](#).
- Choose a gift that can be enjoyed collectively, rather than individually— like a zoo or museum family membership, performance/event tickets, and enjoy together. [\(environmental, social, economic\)](#)
- Make the gift yourself or with family — craft, canned or baked goods. [\(social, environmental\)](#)
- Give socially conscious gifts — Ten Thousand Villages, West Side Bazaar, Global Exchange Fair Trade online store. [\(economic, social\)](#)
- Donate unwanted gifts or re-gift to friends and family if appropriate. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Make the decision as a family that each person buys for only one other family member or do a gift swap of a gift you'd like to regift. [\(economic\)](#)

- Package gifts in material that can be composted (shredded paper, cornstarch peanuts). (environmental)
- Choose battery-free toys or buy and use rechargeable batteries. (environmental)
- Give a bus pass subscription, or gift a bike. (environmental)
- Use yummy, natural treats in stockings. (nuts, fruit and baked goods) (environmental)
- Do not use cheap stocking stuffers. (environmental)
- If shopping online – buy in consolidated order to save on packaging and emissions. (environmental)
- Participate in gift giving in moderation – do not panic overbuy for the sake of gift giving. (environmental, economic)

### Give to a Charity

- Adopt a community member or family and bring them a meal or a gift. (social)
- Adopt a new pet if you can do so, to give an animal a loving home. (social)
- Adopt a charity in need. (economic, social)
- Donate to food pantries and shelters (nonperishables, clothing, home goods). (social, economic)

### Give a gift card

- The options are endless. Local community establishments need our support.
  - Local Restaurants (economic, social)
  - Local hair dresser/barber (economic, social)
  - Local grocery establishment (friends or family could also use the additional financial assistance) (economic, social)
- Digital gifts -- give loved ones something they can enjoy immediately -- digital gift card, gift of digital subscriptions for e-books, streaming services, online classes, and audiobooks. (economic, social)

### Holiday Tree Decisions and Decorations

- Get a chemical free tree. Choose a potted tree over a cut tree and then plant it after the holidays. (environmental, economic)
- Choose a cut tree over an artificial tree and have it mulched afterward. Cut your own tree. (environmental, social)
- Recycle your Christmas tree or donate tree to the zoo to feed the animals there. (environmental, social)
- Replace burned-out bulbs rather than throwing out the string of lights. (environmental)

- Use string lights that are RoHS compliant and free from Prop 65 warning labels – less hazardous substances. [\(environmental, social\)](#)
- Use holiday lights in moderation — do not over decorate. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Turn lights off at the end of the night or use a timer. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Look for energy-efficient lights/decorations — use LED lights as they use a fraction of the electricity of conventional lights. Use solar powered lights outside [\(environmental\)](#)
- Choose durable and meaningful ornaments that last longer than the plastic or glass ones. Better yet, create your own ornaments with family/friends. [\(environmental, social\)](#)
- Create decorations from natural materials like pine boughs, cones, popcorn, seed bells, “suet ornaments for the birds” with family. [\(social, environmental\)](#).

### Greeting Cards and wrapping

- Use e-cards instead. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Make your own wrapping paper (use newspaper or go without). [\(environmental\)](#)
- Use postcards rather than holiday cards or use greeting cards made of recycled paper. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Support local artists & designers for your cards. [\(social, economic\)](#)
- Use leftover holiday cards for gift labels. [\(environmental\)](#)

### Recycling tips

- Recycle cookie tins. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Hard-to-open rigid plastic packaging can be recycled. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Check with your town/city to see if it will recycle gift paper – use newspaper, fabric, or recycled paper instead. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Ribbon should not be put into recycling; either reuse or do not use for multiple years. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Tape should be removed if possible — does not recycle well. [\(environmental\)](#)
- Compost scraps where appropriate — use a composter! [\(environmental\)](#)
- Recycle your tree or leave your tree in your backyard until spring as a haven for birds & small animals. [\(environmental\)](#)

### Travel to & from festivities

The choices you make regarding travel affect your total carbon footprint more than anything else.

- Take a train or bus instead of flying whenever possible. Check the Amtrak site for [deals, discounts](#), and [rewards program](#). If you feel you must drive, use an electric vehicle ([Environment](#)) or car pool! ([environmental, social](#))
- Wear masks in public transportation, and inside crowded settings. ([social](#))
- Offset fossil fuel pollution – consider carbon offset initiatives. ([environmental](#))

### Miscellaneous:

- Donate your time to a sustainable cause – give back for the holidays and improve the community and the planet.
- Volunteer at a Food Pantry, Shelter, Charity or Hospital to bring joy to those less fortunate. ([social](#))
- Adopt a community member or family and bring them a meal or a gift. ([social, economic](#))
- Spend “Black Friday” outside, doing something you love and care about, rather than spending. ([social, economic](#))
- For the new year, commit to one or two days a week of being vegan. ([environmental](#))
- Get your exercise over the holiday season, make healthy food choices and don’t overindulge. ([social](#))
- Adopt a low-waste lifestyle. ([environmental](#))
- Recycle old electronics. If still working, resell or donate old electronics to someone in need. ([environmental, social](#))
- Use eco-friendly products when cleaning. ([environmental](#))