

## A Gift to the Earth



photo courtesy NASA

### Mini Fact:

This photo was taken by the Apollo 8 crew, the first astronauts to leave Earth's orbit, in December 1968.

The holiday season is a hard time for our planet. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, Americans throw away a million extra tons of garbage each week. We use much more energy on holiday lights.

Let's give our planet a break for the holidays! Here are some gift ideas for Earth.

### Plan ahead

• Start by shopping green. Take your own reusable bags when you shop for gifts, party supplies or groceries. Remind your family to look for gifts that don't have a lot of extra packaging.

• Save gently used ribbons, bows and wrapping paper to use again next year. Be careful when unwrapping gifts so that paper can be reused. If you buy wrapping supplies, look for recycled products. Try not to buy paper with metallic designs; it's harder to recycle.



photo by Mark Buckawicki

### Holiday greetings

• Cut up holiday cards you've received to make gift tags for next year. Recycle cards when you're finished enjoying them.

• Suggest to your family that you send electronic holiday cards, or send those made from recycled paper.

### Creative gifts

• Make "consumable" gifts (items that are meant to be used up), such as fudge, cookies or candy, soup or hot chocolate mix, or dog treats for a pet lover, and give them in reusable containers. (Try the dog treat recipe below!)

• Plants make great gifts. Think about a living plant that can be put in the ground next spring.

### Take an energy holiday

• Use low-energy lights for decorating your tree and home during the holidays. LED lights are more than 90 percent more efficient than traditional lights.

They're safer, too, because they don't get as hot as traditional bulbs. And while they cost more, they will last up to 20 years.



photo by Timo Newton-Syms

### Traditions

Remember, many of our favorite traditions are already friendly to the environment. Do your Christmas traditions include these?

- Singing carols
- Sharing meals
- Visiting friends and family
- Worshipping



photo by Ethan Lindsey

### Tree solutions

Will your family have a "real," or cut, Christmas tree this year? Many families are switching to artificial trees. Others are using live trees that can be replanted after the holidays.

• If you have a cut tree, your community may offer options for recycling the tree. Check with your city about tree recycling.

• If recycling isn't available, think about how you can use the tree. For instance, you might drag it away from the house and lay it on its side. Small animals and birds will love its protection for nesting during the cold months.

• Suggest to your family that you cut off the branches and use the trunk as a garden stake for vegetables next spring.

• Place your tree outside and decorate it with treats for birds, such as pinecones covered in peanut butter and suet, popcorn strings or cranberry strings.



photo by Shawn Calloun

Make your own tree out of something you love. This book tree is at the Gleason Library at the University of San Francisco.

## Resources



### On the Web:

- [1.usa.gov/1Q2bKO4](http://1.usa.gov/1Q2bKO4)
- [audubon.org/content/join-christmas-bird-count](http://audubon.org/content/join-christmas-bird-count)

### At the library:

- "The New 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth" by The Earthworks Group

## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of gifts for Earth are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



BOWS, CARDS,  
CONSUMABLE, EARTH,  
EFFICIENT, ENERGY,  
GARBAGE, GIFT,  
HOLIDAY, LIGHTS,  
PACKAGING, PLANET,  
PLANT, RECYCLE,  
RIBBONS, SEASON,  
SHARING, SINGING, TRADITIONS, TREE.

P J N S N O I T I D A R T E H  
A W E L C Y C E R T I N U O C  
C N O S A E S S E B E P L A E G  
K E A R T H T N B I L I R H G  
A Q G R A H A O C A D D F L A  
G V E R G L N I N A S W O B B  
I E I I P S F T Y G R E N E R  
N N L C Z F S I N G I N G X A  
G I F T E L B A M U S N O C G

## Cook's Corner

### Holiday Dog Treats for Giving

#### You'll need:

- 2 cups whole-wheat flour
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup cornmeal
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil

- 4 beef or chicken bouillon cubes
- 2 cups boiling water
- If desired, garlic, crisp bacon strips or bacon drippings



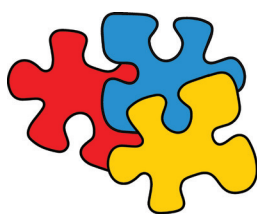
\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

1. Combine first four ingredients. Mix well.
2. Dissolve bouillon cubes in boiling water.
3. Add bouillon to flour mixture. Mix to make a stiff dough.
4. Roll onto a floured surface. Cut out small shapes with cookie cutter or glass.
5. Bake in a preheated 300-degree oven for 30 minutes.
6. Let stand overnight to harden.

## Puzzling

Unscramble the words below that remind us of holidays.



tsigf \_\_\_\_\_  
pnriwapg \_\_\_\_\_  
hslgit \_\_\_\_\_  
pnhopsig \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: gifts, wrapping, lights, shopping.

## Mini Jokes



**Claus:** What lives at the North Pole, has a red nose, is brown and has a hump?

**Clyde:** Rudolph the Red-Nosed Camel!

## Eco Note



We waste about half the energy we use to heat our homes. How does it escape? Under doors, around window frames, through the attic, up the chimney — even right through some window glass. Make sure windows are closed tightly. Plug cracks around doors and windows. Make a door draft stopper ([bit.ly/20o65p3](http://bit.ly/20o65p3)). And pull down window shades or close curtains at night.

adapted with permission from "The New 50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth" by The Earthworks Group, Andrews McMeel Publishing ([andrewsmcmeel.com](http://andrewsmcmeel.com))

## For later:

Talk with your family about how to make your holidays "greener."

## Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: [bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching\\_guides.html](http://bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching_guides.html)

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