

## Unwrapping Christmas

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### **Waste amounts at Christmas**

If your family is any like mine, after the Christmas gift unpacking spree comes the shovelling of wrapping paper. Consequently, the amount of packaging waste in Germany rises by 20% around Christmas (see e.g. [here](#)). Also, if you are any like me, you either nod gratefully when the cashier asks you: „Shall I wrap this in gift paper?“, or you use about twice the amount of paper actually required just to make sure there is no hole in the wrapping afterwards (I use very little adhesive tape, though ; ) ).

Working on waste prevention, it is time to think about this. Luckily, I have learned that lots of people have done this before me already. There are quite a lot of blogs for example, and even the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has a website on this topic.

I have also learned that wrapping paper for Christmas is something relatively new. Only since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century it is used widely. As it so often is the case, the solutions applied before were more sustainable: Gift boxes could simply be reused. And, of course, the English tradition of filling socks is even more preferable (We fill boots on St. Nicolas' day here in Germany). Unfortunately, most of the presents we give today do neither fit into socks nor boots – or later we do not fit into these anymore.

### **Alternative Solutions**

So, what solutions are out there?

First of all, quite obviously, you can use no paper at all. While this sounds boring and a little unkind in the first place, some very interesting ideas exist. For example, you use the gift to wrap it in itself – there are breath-taking examples for pullovers. You can also wrap one present into another, e.g. a toy car or a book into a pullover – if you are a pullover giving person.

Next comes the idea of Reuse. Old newspapers can make for a wrapping, and the idea of using a box more than once was already discussed.

Remanufacturing happens for example when old magazines are used to create wrapping paper collages – even personified ones. You can also employ some of the stuff you are

hiding in the basement or garage just in case you might need them one day (you may now). So you can turn a couple of boards into a toy stable for toy horses, or a pit stop for toy cars, etc.

If the persons you are giving presents to are somewhat grown-up, you may also consider this: Most of the time, the best things in life aren't things; and these come without wrapping anyway.

P.S.: Thanks to Laura Vetter for helping me with research into sustainable wrapping.