



# How you can make sure that you don't waste Christmas

The credit crunch may have tempered our spending, but this is still the season of excess. Grace Hammond reports.

OPTIMISTS have been busy viewing the economic doom and gloom as a much needed wake-up call.

While once lone voices in the years of unbridled materialism, those who advocated a more measured approach to consumerism finally seen to have been proved right.

However, despite most of us cutting back on the usual festive splurge and the high street feeling the pinch, old habits die hard. Add together the piles of Christmas cards, the piles of pine needles and unwanted leftovers and it remains a picture of immoderation, but in these straitened times is it possible to cut back on the season of excess?

## Food waste

We tend to produce 20-30 per cent more waste at Christmas than any other time during the year, but according to environmental charity Wastewatch, 60 per cent of household waste could either be recycled or composted instead of being sent to landfill.

Food sent to landfill doesn't

break down into compost but releases greenhouse gases instead – this is because it's buried and doesn't get any air. Love Food Hate Waste reckons that 15 million tonnes of CO2 are released every year by throwing food away.

By logging onto the Recycle Now website [[www.recyclenow.com](http://www.recyclenow.com)], you can find out what your local council picks up from your doorstep or your block of flats.

Glass, aluminium, plastic bottles and paper are all pretty standard these days, with many councils also offering green banks that can take what your kerbside scheme can't.

Some councils also offer food recycling schemes. By recycling your food waste this way – or by starting your own compost (the Recycle Now website has tips on how to get started, with many local councils subsidising the cost of a compost bin) – you'll help reduce CO2 emissions.

## Christmas cards

The Royal Mail delivered about 150 million cards and packets every day during the pre-

Christmas period, but for every tonne of paper recycled, you can help save 17 trees. Most councils prefer not to take Christmas cards because of the glittery and shiny bits, but a scheme run jointly by the Woodland Trust and Recycle Now means that you can take your cards to WH Smith, Marks & Spencer, Tesco or TK Maxx stores – all you have to do is look out for the special recycling bins.

## Mobile phones

If you get a new mobile for Christmas, getting rid of your old phone safely helps to cut down on your waste and also helps reduce the amount of toxic chemicals (like mercury) and

reusable elements (like gold, silver and nickel) being sent to landfill.

Cash back solutions like Envirofone [[www.envirofone.com](http://www.envirofone.com)], MSN [[www.msnmobilerecycling.com](http://www.msnmobilerecycling.com)] or Fonebank [[www.fonebank.com](http://www.fonebank.com)] can pay up to £180 for your old phone, which will be given a new lease of life in a developing country.

If charity is more your thing, you can send your phone to Amnesty International [[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)], Trees for Cities [[www.treesforcities.org](http://www.treesforcities.org)] or Oxfam [[www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)], to name a few. Apple [[www.apple.com/uk](http://www.apple.com/uk)] will also take your old mobile or iPod and recycle it for free.

## Trees

About eight million Christmas trees were bought this year, says Recycle Now, and if one of yours was the variety that can't be replanted, your local council might be able to come collect it and turn it into mulch and chippings.

Be sure to remove any baubles or tinsel before putting it outside. If your council can't collect, you can also take it to your local recycling centre and put it in the green waste section.

If your Christmas tree was of the artificial variety, it can be donated to charity or listed on sites like Gumtree [[www.gumtree.com](http://www.gumtree.com)] or Freecycle [[www.freecycle.org](http://www.freecycle.org)], where it can find a new home.

## Books



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Did Aunt Velda give you a tome you're never going to read? If you can't re-gift it to someone else, log on to Green Metropolis [www.greenmetropolis.com], which will buy your book off you (for a minimum of £3), and send 5p to the Woodland Trust's Plant A Tree scheme.

#### Electronics

They might seem small enough to chuck in the bin, but when it comes to smaller electronics like kettles, cameras, irons and mobile phones, one-third of us find it easier to throw our old ones away rather than recycle when we buy new ones.

Throwing such metals into the bin means that we're wasting precious resources.

By logging onto the Recycle Now website [www.recyclenow.com], you can find out which electricals you can recycle in your postcode, or which retailers near you will take back your old electrical appliances in store.



**BRANCH LINES: Eight million trees will be bought this year.**