

Alternatives to Buying Gift Wrap and Ribbon

Americans spend around \$2.7 billion annually on ribbons, paper, & bows.
Let's change that.

1. Decorations from the Natural World

Natural touches can be found in backyards, beaches, and fields: leaves, stones, sprigs of berries, twigs, shells, pods, or pine cones. All are naturally beautiful and easily gathered.

2. Furoshiki and Other Cloth Wraps

Using a piece of beautifully printed cloth and a few knots in interesting places will create an eye-catching package. Soft-wrap alternatives can also be great gifts and can include scarves, runners, tablecloths, baby blankets, or beach/bath towels.

3. Reusable Paper

Reusable paper gift bags or shopping bags come in all styles and are excellent alternatives to gift wrap.

4. Clay Pots

Clay pots are reusable and can make a present look more interesting. Tie a pot with a reused ribbon or strips of scrap fabric. Personalize the pot using ceramic markers.

5. Baskets

Baskets come in every size and shape imaginable and make excellent “containers” for gifts.

6. Buckets, Bowls, Stockpots, Tins

Many containers make great no-wrapping-needed packaging. A bucket or watering can is easy to fill with gardening supplies for that special someone who has a green thumb. A mixing bowl or stockpot makes the perfect package for your favorite cook. Don't forget tins—most of us have three or four somewhere and with an imaginative ribbon or other colorful decoration, they can result in a unique presentation. For that finishing touch from the kitchen, try a homemade gingerbread cookie or several cinnamon sticks.

7. Maps/Other Paper Possibilities: Sheet Music, Calendars, Magazines, Posters . . .

Maps never lose their visual appeal. Put them to good use as wrap that the recipient will turn over and over before opening. Don't forget magazine pages, sheet music, calendars, posters, notes from a class, a crossword puzzle—all potential wrappings.

8. Glass Jars or Vases

Glass jars and vases are available and versatile. Use fabric or recycled paper to line the interior as reversed wrapping to hide the gift, or leave it transparent for a “so close yet so far” effect.

9. Alternatives to Ribbon: Twine, Yarn, Cord, Cloth Ribbon, Bias Tape

Avoid sticky situations at the recycling facility that conventional, often petroleum-based tape can cause. Try opting out of tape by making tightly creased folds as you wrap and securing the package by with a narrow length of fabric, natural twine, wool yarn, cord, cloth ribbon, bias tape, or shoelaces — all can be reused.

10. Gifts Requiring No Package at All: Gifts of Time, Activity, Imagination

An alternative to gifts that require wrapping are imaginative gifts of time or activity — a massage, a house or apartment cleaning, lawn care, closet organization, conversation over a special meal, a walk near a lake followed by candle-lit dinner, a stay at a favorite bed-and-breakfast . . .