

Ethical & Sustainable Gift Guide

Non-Material Gifts

Buying non-material gifts is one of the best ways to give gifts with little or no impact on the environment. These gifts can also add value to someone's life in a way material gifts often don't.

Options for this include:

- zoo or museum memberships
- massage or spa gift cards
- subscriptions to online classes (e.g. [Skillshare](#), [MasterClass](#), [Babbel](#))
- concert/event tickets
- lawncare or home services (e.g. compost service membership, deep cleaning service).

Quality and Longevity

Buying high quality gifts that will last for years or even a lifetime can limit overall consumption. This idea goes hand in hand with the idea of practical gifts. If you give someone something they get a lot of use out of it will be more sustainable in the long run. When looking for quality and longevity in a product you may need to do some research. One trustworthy resource for this is [Consumer Reports](#), which offers reviews of many household products based on a variety of testing criteria. You can access consumer reports through the library, both online and in print.

You can find helpful product information from a wide range of online sources, from in-site customer reviews to niche YouTube channels, but when you're looking at this information it's important to distinguish between genuine reviews and advertising in disguise. Genuine thoughtful reviews will include a detailed explanation of evaluation criteria and will explain how or why they selected the products for review. The best of these reviews will also help you understand what constitutes quality in a particular product area.

These are a few examples of YouTube channels that provide these kinds of reviews:

- [America's Test Kitchen](#) (kitchen products)
- [Rose Anvil](#) (shoes)
- [Vacuum Wars](#) (vacuums and air purifiers)
- [BottlePro](#) (water bottles)
- [Mattress Clarity](#) (mattresses and bedding)
- [Project Farm](#) (tools, small appliances and more)

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Sustainable/Ethical Products

Every new item you buy has an environmental and human impact, but some goods are produced more ethically and sustainably than others. There is no standard definition for what it means for something to be ethically produced but there are several ways finding products that do better in terms of labor exploitation and environmental impact.

Self-Employed or Fairtrade Artisans:

Buying gifts from self-employed artisans limits the likelihood of labor abuse. You can find these goods at local shops or craft fairs or even online. However, you should watch out for “drop shipping” (the practice of buying and reselling cheaply made goods, which has become common on platforms like Etsy) and be aware that artisans may use materials with a high environmental impact or that were produced under unethical conditions.

- [Global Gallery](#) and [World Peaces](#) are local options for handmade and fair-trade goods.
- [Columbus on the Cheap](#) has a great [list of local holiday craft fairs](#). Some highlights include [Winter Fair](#) at the Ohio Expo Center and [Not Your Mama’s Craft Markets](#).
- [Etsy](#) is an online platform where self-employed artisans can sell handmade goods etc.

Finding Ethical Brands:

These days lots of brands claim to be sustainable in one way or another. It’s easy to use green labels or earthy looking packaging to create the impression of sustainability. This is called “green washing,” and it can make it hard to tell which companies are actually walking the walk. Companies that are pursuing ethical production should be able to present specific details about what they are doing and back it up with evidence.

These resources offer a good starting point for understanding ethical production and finding ethical products:

- This article discusses many of the most common ethical production certifications. It explains what each certification can tell you about a product as well as any issues associated with a certification: [19 Manufacturing Certifications & Ethics Certifications You Should Know](#)
- The [B Corp](#) finder and the [Good on You](#) website can help you find ethical brands.
- Online sustainable marketplaces: [EarthHero](#), [Made Trade](#), [Blk + Grn](#), [Thrive Market](#)