

Huge rise in household waste over holiday period

1st January 2026



Image: BreakingNewsEnglish

There are many holidays around the end of the year. These involve parties, family get-togethers, and the giving of gifts. However, celebrations for Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and the New Year can create a lot of trash.

The USA's

Environmental Protection Agency estimates that household waste increases by 25 per cent over the holiday period. Miriam Holsinger, co-president of Eureka Recycling, urges us to carefully separate what we throw away. She said: "It really does make a difference if you just take a little extra time to put those boxes and those bottles and cans in the blue bin." Engineering professor Dan Hoornweg said we should avoid producing waste as much as possible in the first place.

Various experts have reported on how best to deal with holiday waste. Professor Hoornweg advised people to be aware of and follow the recycling policies in their town. He said different places have different rules. Ms Holsinger asked people to be careful when they throw away things like electronics, toys, and Christmas lights. Other experts also offered great advice. One said it was good to think ahead to reduce waste. She said one idea was to buy "experiences over stuff". This means buying someone a ticket to see a play or concert, instead of buying a present that comes in lots of packaging and a cardboard box. She also recommended giving people digital cards and gift cards.

Sources: npr.org / theguardian.com / cbsnews.com

Writing

We should all buy fewer things. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

holidays / end of the year / family get-togethers / celebrations / waste / recycling / experts / rules / electronics / toys / advice / experiences / concert / cardboard box

True / False

- 1) The article says there are a dozen holidays around the end of the year. T / F
- 2) A US agency says we produce 25% more waste over the holiday period. T / F
- 3) A recycling expert says we should put cans in the green recycling bin. T / F
- 4) The article says the USA should be in first place for waste reduction. T / F
- 5) All towns have the same recycling policies. T / F
- 6) A professor urged caution when throwing away electronics. T / F
- 7) An expert said it was better to buy people experiences than stuff. T / F
- 8) The expert said it was a good idea to buy digital gifts. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. involve | a. to begin with |
| 2. estimates | b. regulations |
| 3. urges | c. container |
| 4. bin | d. reckons |
| 5. in the first place | e. things |
| 6. experts | f. include |
| 7. rules | g. specialists |
| 8. throw away | h. wrapping |
| 9. stuff | i. encourages |
| 10. packaging | j. discard |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of the end-of-the-year holidays?
- b) What do you do at the end of the year?
- c) How has this year been for you?
- d) How much trash do you produce?
- e) What difference does separating trash make?
- f) What extra waste do you create over the holiday period?
- g) How can we avoid producing waste?
- h) What is your advice regarding recycling?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. There are many holidays around | a. deal with holiday waste |
| 2. family get-togethers and the giving | b. possible in the first place |
| 3. household waste increases | c. what we throw away |
| 4. carefully separate | d. to reduce waste |
| 5. avoid producing waste as much as | e. rules |
| 6. experts have reported on how best to | f. the end of the year |
| 7. He said different places have different | g. in lots of packaging |
| 8. be careful when they throw away things | h. by 25 per cent |
| 9. it was good to think ahead | i. like electronics |
| 10. a present that comes | j. of gifts |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- What are the recycling policies in your town?
- What are your New Year resolutions?
- How good are you at recycling?
- Would you rather be given an experience or stuff?
- What do you think of cardboard boxes?
- What do you think of digital gifts and gift cards?
- What questions would you like to ask a waste expert?

Spelling

- These nylvioe parties
- family get-gerhotets
- ilaoesrebcnt for Christmas
- carefully eartsepa what we throw away
- eirenegiqnn professor
- we should odvai producing waste
- various texreps
- follow the celiynrgc policies
- different places have different eslur
- licoterescn, toys, and Christmas lights
- She said one idea was to buy execsreiepn
- lots of packaging and a bcadrdras box

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. d	3. i	4. c	5. a
6. g	7. b	8. j	9. e	10. h

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	When does the article say there are many holidays?
2.	What does the article say celebrations can create a lot of?
3.	How much more waste do we produce at the end of the year?
4.	Where did an expert say we should place bottles and cans?
5.	What did an engineering professor say we should avoid?
6.	What did the professor say we needed to be aware of?
7.	What did the professor say different places have?
8.	What did an expert say it was important to do to reduce waste?
9.	What did the expert recommend buying as gifts instead of "stuff"?
10.	What did an expert say were good gifts?

Speaking – Waste

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst things to waste at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| • Packaging | • Our energy |
| • Food | • Skills |
| • Electricity | • Petrol |
| • Time | • Money |

Answers – True False

1	F	2	T	3	F	4	F	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.