

Feel-good gifts

Great sites for heartwarming presents for less than \$50

If you're dreading those last-minute trips to the mall to buy the same old gloves and neckties, check out the Web sites on next few pages for gifts you can feel really good about giving—and not just because they cost less than \$50! The 13 sites offer items that can help save resources, reduce poverty, and support artists and crafters here and abroad. And they're goodies your friends will really flip for, from fun jewelry and housewares to tasty chocolates.

We had our experts at Consumer Reports WebWatch, an Internet watchdog group, screen all of these sites. Our Internet investigators made sure each one complies with our guidelines for customer service, privacy, and disclosure of important information (including complete contact info, so you can track down the company if something goes wrong). We ordered all the great gifts pictured here and checked them out, though we did not test them in our laboratories. So don't be afraid to give something a little different this year—it can make a real difference!

Fair-trade gifts

These online shops follow fair-trade principles, which means they pay fair wages and ensure good working conditions for the artisans and farmers who create the products in developing nations. Although no group certifies fair-trade crafts, the nonprofit TransFair USA certifies agricultural products. You'll find the group's black-and-white "Fair Trade Certified" label on chocolate, coffee, tea, flowers, and more.

Originalgood.com

This site's mission is to support artisans around the world. It sells handbags, notebooks, jewelry, housewares, and other goodies. We like the big selection of pretty and practical baskets (\$14.95 to \$34.95). Shown at left is a Top Seed multistrand necklace, \$24.95, made of glass and metal beads by artisans in Gujarat, India.

Shipping \$6.95 for standard

Returns 15 days for refund; no returns or exchanges of food items

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 15 with standard shipping; Dec. 18 with next-day air; Dec. 23 with overnight

Theochocolate.com

The gift boxes here carry the Fair Trade Certified label, and our taste testers gave

them the thumbs-up. Theo Chocolates buys its cacao direct from farmers and grower cooperatives. For fair-trade foods and crafts that make great gifts also check out the Global Exchange Fair Trade Online Store (<http://store.gxonlinestore.org>) run by an international human-rights organization.

Shipping FedEx shipping starts at \$10

Returns 30 days for refund, excluding shipping and handling charges; food returnable only if damaged

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 15 for gift boxes shipped by FedEx, Dec. 17 for chocolate bars by ground shipping

Tenthousandvillages.com

Founded in 1946, Ten Thousand Villages is a nonprofit fair-trade group that markets gifts and home décor products



Clockwise from top: blue silk scarf, \$38, from Tenthousandvillages.com; telephone wire bowls, \$18 to \$40, from Spiralfoundation.org; 12-piece gift box, \$24, from Theochocolate.com; and glass and metal bead necklace, \$24.95, from Originalgood.com



WENDELL WEBBER: PROP STYLING: JEFFSTYLES.COM

Green gifts

made by artisans in 36 countries. It has a great collection of scarves (starting at \$12), including the beautiful aqua-blue silk scarf with hand embroidery from India (\$38) pictured on the previous page. Also check out the red elephant-shape ceramic planter from Nepal (\$20). When you view an item on the site, you can click on the name of the artisan group to find out more about the people who made it.

Shipping \$5.50 to \$20.50 for standard

Returns 60 days for a refund, excluding shipping fees

Last day to buy for Christmas For standard ground shipping, Dec. 16 for the West Coast, Dec. 18 for the Midwest, and Dec. 19 for the East Coast; Dec. 22 for second-day shipping and Dec. 23 for overnight

Spiralfoundation.org

All proceeds support humanitarian programs, including promoting literacy, providing primary health care, and awarding scholarships, in Nepal and Vietnam. We love the cool tableware and home décor items made from reclaimed or recycled materials. Click on "Spiral Shop" then "Recycled" for round silver coasters (\$24 for six) made in Nepal using discarded wrappers from various food products. Click on "Telephone Wire" for colorful bowls with a spiral pattern (\$18 to \$40) made from discarded phone wire by young disabled artisans in Vietnam.

Shipping \$8 on most items for standard FedEx Ground

Returns Accepted only if the product is damaged; will exchange any item within 30 days

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 16

These sites feature fun, eco-friendly gifts for men, women, kids, and pets. Lots of the goods are made from recycled or repurposed materials, saving resources and preventing waste.

Fao.com

Click on "Earth Friendly Toys" on FAO Schwarz's home page to see its collection of classic stuffed animals and toys made from sustainable materials and natural or nontoxic paints or dyes. The cuddly yellow Benjamin the Frog plush toy, at right (\$25) is made with organic cotton.

Shipping \$4.50 to \$19.50 for standard, depending on gift price

Returns 365 days, excluding shipping

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 15 for standard ground shipping

Btcelelements.com

Find the perfect gift for a friend who is both stylish and eco-conscious at this online boutique specializing in clothing, accessories, and home décor. Many of the items are made from recycled or reused materials, such as a bracelet made from old, damaged skateboards (\$24), earrings made from shiny vinyl records in eight colors (\$18 a pair), and a set of two blue tumblers made from recycled wine bottles (\$26). We also liked the cool Fan Belt at right, a great gift for your guy, made from the inner tubes of tires (\$38).

Shipping \$5 flat rate for standard

Returns 30 days

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 20 for standard shipping; Dec. 22 for overnight shipping

Westpawdesign.com

Find well-designed, green gifts for your furry friends at this environmentally friendly site. The fabric and the filling of the Eco Nap dog bed (available in five sizes, starting at \$27.90) are made of IntelliLoft, which is constituted from recycled plastic bottles, as is the Eco-Friendly Flower (\$8) for cats, filled with organic catnip. The site also has a collection of Christmas-themed cat and dog toys. (See page 73 for tips on buying safe pet toys for the holidays.) Keep Fido warm in the sweater at right, made from reclaimed cotton fibers (\$38).

Shipping \$6.50 to \$28 for standard shipping, depending on gift price

Returns 30 days; customer pays the shipping cost of returning or exchanging product unless there is a manufacturing defect

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 12 for standard shipping; Dec. 19 for overnight shipping

Earthtechproducts.com

For green gadget lovers, this site has lots of gifts that save energy or allow you to cut down on the disposable batteries you use. Check out the XrayLED hand crank flashlight (\$37) shown at right. It can be powered by hand (a 30-second wind yields 20 minutes of ultrabright light) or by a rechargeable battery. The multifunction solar-powered LED-light-and-water-bottle combo (\$30) has a solar panel in its cap.

Shipping Varies by item

Returns 30 days, excluding original shipping fees and any restocking/handling fee, if applicable

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 13 for ground shipping; Dec. 19 for overnight shipping



Clockwise from top: hand-crank flashlight, \$37, from Earthtechproducts.com; Fan Belt, \$38, from Btcelelements.com; dog sweater, \$38, from Westpawdesign.com; Benjamin the Frog, \$25, from Fao.com.

Greener gift wrap and cards

■ **Nightowlpapergoods.com** has faux-wood holiday cards on recycled paper.

■ **Luckycrow.com**'s fabric gift bags are reusable and come in lots of cute prints.

■ **Greenfieldpaper.com** sells cards made from recycled paper embedded with wildflower seeds that you can plant. Also

check out "Joy" cards made from recycled paper and the recycled wrapping paper printed with soy-based inks.

NOTE: Shipping costs for these sites are reasonable. Just be sure to order by Dec. 1 or so if you want your cards and wrapping paper to arrive in time for Christmas.

*Charitable gifts

Surprise and inspire the picky people on your list who already have everything: Give a donation to a charity of their choice or a loan to an entrepreneur they select. Those make good last-minute gifts, since you can order online until Christmas Eve or even Christmas morning.

Networkforgood.org/ goodcard

When you send a Good Card, you choose a donation amount (\$10, \$25, \$50, or \$100) and the recipient donates the money to the charity of her choice, say, a local animal rescue group or a nonprofit fighting a disease. The site boasts that it has 1.5 million charities to choose from.

Shipping \$5, which includes processing, so all of the donation goes to charity
Returns None; recipient must use gift within 12 months or it expires

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 15 to

order a card to be mailed; Dec. 24 to send a card via e-mail

Kiva.org

With a gift certificate from this site, your friends and family can help entrepreneurs in developing countries work themselves out of poverty. Click on "Kiva Gifts" to buy certificates in amounts starting at \$25. The recipient can browse profiles of entrepreneurs, such as a man in Tanzania who wants to open his second glass shop in a city center or a woman in Tajikistan who sells eggs and wants to increase her sales turnover. The gift recipient can get

updates and, when the loan is repaid, lend the money to a different entrepreneur or withdraw it.

Shipping None

Returns No time limit; once gifts are redeemed, no returns accepted

Last day to buy for Christmas Sent instantly via e-mail, so Dec. 24 or even Dec. 25

Changingthepresent.org

You can contribute to a cause that's close to someone's heart and create a personalized greeting card to tell her about the donation you made in her name. You'll find programs here from hundreds of nonprofits (donation amounts start at \$2). For example, you can donate a sports jersey to a disabled athlete for \$30 or provide vaccinations for a child through UNICEF for \$17.

Shipping \$2.75 plus postage; no e-card without ordering a printed card too

Returns None

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 15 for a card to be mailed; Dec. 24 or Dec. 25 for e-mail card

Worldwildlife.org

The World Wildlife Fund's "adopt an animal" gift is fun for kids or anyone who loves critters and conservation. Choose from more than 80 species. For a donation of \$25 the recipient will get an adoption certificate and photo; for \$50 she'll get those items plus a plush stuffed animal of the adopted species. We liked the stuffed blue-footed booby shown at left. If you want the recipient to be able to select the animal, give her a WWF Gift Adoption Card (\$50). All donations go toward conservation projects and protecting endangered species around the globe. To order, go to Worldwildlife.org, click on "Donate" (in the upper right-hand corner of the screen), then "Visit the Online Gift Center," then "Adoptions." Or go to <https://secure.worldwildlife.org/ogc/>.

Shipping Free

Returns None

Last day to buy for Christmas Dec. 17

Clockwise from top right: card from Changingthepresent.org; blue-footed booby and certificate of adoption from Worldwildlife.org; Good Card from Networkforgood.org; gift certificate from Kiva.org.



Clockwise from left: silver and amethyst earrings, \$18, from Brooklyn Things; vintage Everyday Housewife apron, \$32.50, from Momo's Retro Fashions; teardrop vase, \$25, from Bridgeman Studios; and cosmetics bag in cherry, \$16.90, from Meringue Designs.

*Handmade gifts

Etsy.com is like the world's largest craft fair. The gifts are unique, the prices tend to be reasonable, and it feels good to support mom-and-pop businesses. Since you buy directly from artists and crafters who set up their own shops on the site, you can find out how an item was made and sometimes make special requests.

How it works

- After setting up a free account, you buy items directly from sellers using PayPal or credit cards.
- In each seller's online shop you can browse product photos and descriptions and read the owner's profile and policies. Shipping options vary. To check them out, look at the bottom of the page of the listed item under "Shipping" or click on "Shop Policies" on the main shop page. Each seller also has its own policies on returns and exchanges; they're usually listed on the "Shop Policies" page as well.
- To see whether a seller has a good reputation, click on the "Feedback" link on the shop's main page to view ratings and

comments from other buyers.

- If you have a problem with a transaction—say, a seller isn't sending you the item you bought in a timely manner—Etsy.com encourages you to contact the seller via the "Conversations" feature, an internal e-mail system for site members. You can also report the problem to Etsy.com (send an e-mail to support@etsy.com) and it will investigate and work to resolve it. Keep in mind, though, that like eBay, Etsy.com is a venue for connecting buyers and sellers and is not directly involved in purchases. Etsy.com charges the seller a fee for listing an item and a small percentage of the sale price when the item sells.

Here's a sampling of the hundreds of Etsy.com shops you can check out:

MERINGUE DESIGNS

www.etsy.com/shop.php?user_id=5279310
This site has a nice selection of pillows, cosmetic bags, and aprons.
Shown: Travel toiletries or cosmetic bag in cherry, \$16.90

MOMO'S RETRO FASHIONS

www.etsy.com/shop.php?user_id=100812
Aprons galore!
Shown: Vintage Everyday Housewife Apron, \$32.50

BRIDGEMAN STUDIOS

www.etsy.com/shop.php?user_id=5504385
Shop here for handmade pottery and decorative works of clay.
Shown: Teardrop vase, \$25

BROOKLYN THINGS

www.etsy.com/shop.php?user_id=5610499
Check out the hand-crafted jewelry.
Shown: Sterling-silver-wrapped amethyst teardrop earrings, \$18