

RECYCLE YOUR TOY PACKAGING THIS CHRISTMAS

Christmas is coming and children are getting excited about what Santa is going to bring them but we are also aware that once unwrapped parents are left with lots of packaging to clear away.

Toys come packed in a variety of ways, sometimes for storage, such as board games and puzzles, but more often in boxes designed to keep the toy safe, unbroken and attractive when it reaches your child on Christmas morning.

Christmas is the busiest time of year for toy sales, with almost half of toys sold in the UK being bought in the last few months of the year in the run up to Christmas. It is not surprising then that this is also the time that most toy packaging is thrown away, but it doesn't have to end up in your bin!

The British Toy and Hobby Association (BTHA) recently commissioned an independent sustainability consultancy to conduct a random analysis of its members' toy packaging. This survey found that on average **72%** of toy packaging is able to be recycled in your kerbside collections and this increases to an average of **80%** if you separate out plastic and cardboard.

Work is being done to improve the non-recyclable elements that are presently used, but until there is a safe and reliable alternative here are some tips for Christmas morning to help make sure as much packaging as possible is recycled or reused rather than ending up in the bin?

1. Remember to retain the safety information on the packaging and store this and the instructions for use of the product in a single safe place at home, in case you need to refer to them in future, or in case you want to pass the toy on to friends, family or a charity shop as they will need the instructions to operate the toy safely.
2. Keep small items of packaging and plastic bags away from children at all times. The small plastic bags that you sometimes get in toy packaging are unlikely to be recyclable, so this should go directly into a rubbish bag.
3. Retain packaging where it is the obvious storage device for the product, such as jigsaws and games. And you may want to keep big boxes to tidy away presents over the Christmas period or to turn into a game when your children have time.
4. Cardboard and moulded pulp will be collected in the kerbside delivery, so this can be folded down or torn up to make room in the recycling bin for collection after Christmas.
5. Some toy packs will come with a plastic film or window. If you separate any plastic windows from the cardboard boxes the main part of the cardboard box can be added to the recycle bin.
6. Have several bags handy so that separate parts can be separated out for your type of collection, that way as you unwrap gifts you can throw things into the corresponding bag, recycling in one bag, rubbish in another, then you don't have to think about separating things out later. Christmas is busy enough already so the easier it is to do as you go along, the more you are likely to recycle.
7. Wire ties should be kept aside from the rest of the packaging. These are not generally recyclable but may be reused in other contexts by adults, for instance as garden ties.
8. The capture of plastic packaging in home collections varies between areas. Plastic blisters/windows marked PET or PETE can be recycled but many authorities do not accept it. You can check at the link below for what is accepted in your local area but if in doubt throw these away (once you have separated them from the cardboard).
9. Check with your local Council as to collection services and municipal recycling facilities and exactly what materials can be recycled in your area as other components may also be recyclable in your area but this differs between authorities. You can often check this with your local authority online ahead of Christmas day so you know what can go into your recycling. Many authorities are able to recycle more items than home delivery can collect, so there may be elements of your packaging that can be taken to the local tip, in addition to the curb-side collections.
10. For information on what you can recycle in your area visit www.recyclenow.com. This will help you decide which bits of toy packaging to separate out from the others such as cardboard, plain paper, printed wrapping paper, metal and various plastics.

Please recycle as much as you can to help make this a greener Christmas.

We hope you have a lovely Christmas and a Playful New Year.