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Good gifts, or green grief? The top 5 gifts that suck at sustainability



As the global plastic-free movement gathers momentum, most of us now know the drill when it comes to packing our bag as we leave the house. Reusable tote? Check. Keep-cup? Check. Bamboo utensils and straw? Check.

But there's one common activity many people don't think twice about when it comes to reducing plastic content: Gift giving.

This Plastic Free July, The Good Registry is taking a deep dive into the plastic hiding away in 5 frequently gifted items. So you know which gifts are green, and which are downright mean (to the planet, that is!).

1. Clothing

Clothing is often a go-to versatile gift idea. A warm scarf for nan in winter. Kooky socks for the man who has everything. A Jojo Bow for the *Dance Mums* obsessed tweenager in your life.

But fabric, in whatever form it's gifted in, is typically made up of over 60% plastic.

This may come as a surprise because, when we think of fabrics, our minds often turn to cotton and naturally made materials.

But the sad truth is, the majority of commonly used fabrics contain plastics — such as polyester, nylon, acrylic and polyamide.

And when these fabrics are washed? They release microscopic plastic fibres that drain out of our washing machines, into the sewer system, and — after a bit of journeying — end up in the ocean.

So, avoid a present that will upset mother nature — and give fast fashion the flick.

2. Flowers

But flowers are organic matter, right?

Well sure. But most florists use cellophane and floral wrapping paper (usually containing polyester fibre) to wrap and present their beautiful blooms.

And what happens to this pretty packaging? More often than not, it's turfed straight into the bin when the flowers are put into a vase. Making floral wrapping paper a sneaky, insidious single-use plastic.

3. Chocolates

Chocolate: delicious for the giftee AND made from organic matter. The perfect gift idea, right? Right.

Until you look at the packaging.

Without naming and shaming, almost every NZ brand that packages upmarket choccies as gifts does so with extravagant amounts of packaging. Which means plastic, plastic, plastic.

From the cellophane wrapped around the box, down to the individually wrapped chocolates. So for the planet, these treats are really not all that sweet.

4. Cosmetics

While it can seem very thoughtful to gift someone a self-care pamper pack, the cosmetics industry has a terrible (w)rap when comes to their packaging.

From individually (plastic) wrapped face-mask sheets to plastic bottles and containers that house nearly every face cream, moisturiser, or hair care product on the market.

Despite many brands touting eco-friendly ingredients, it's a minefield finding brands that do sustainability well. So dodge the danger, and drop cosmetic gifting.

5. Present wrapping

While not technically a present itself, it's all part and parcel of the gift giving experience.

The fact 'wrapping paper' has the word 'paper' in it can be misleading. Often it's filled with non-paper additives such as coloured shapes, glitter or plastics. All of which can't be recycled.

Paper aside, the plastic ribbons and bows — while fetching to the eye — are used but once, only to become a long-term plague on the planet.

So, what's left to gift?

Which brings us to the gifts that rock, now that we know the ones that need to roll (far, far away from us).

Well, we're a little biased here, but we think the number one gift you can give is a gift card from us here at The Good Registry.

Why? You're doing a double-good deed. Not only are you avoiding adding more plastic into the world (our gift cards are entirely digital — no plastic!) you're making sure the money you're spending goes towards a cause that truly needs it.

And best of all, your giftee will get to receive 'the gift of giving' — by donating to any of our partner charities. No waste. All goodness.

So why not take a peek, and find out a bit more about our [Good Registry Gift cards](#)?

If it has to be socks, why not knit some? If it has to be flowers, why not pick some? Chocolates? perfume? A bar of soap? Have a little fun and make some.

And if you want a little further plastic free gifting inspo, check out the [Plastic Free July website](#).

- By **Tori McLennan**

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