

Shop Local  
for the Holidays



# Go Green, Shop Local

As climate change wreaks havoc on the planet, the more individuals who take action, the more likely they are to have an effect.

Shopping local doesn't only get you great service and support your community, it also helps the planet.

Local shopping reduces your carbon footprint — a phrase that Conservation International defines as a way to express the effect a person, corporation or activity has on the environment, especially as regards to the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that are released into the atmosphere by a given activity.

## SHOP BRICK-AND-MORTAR STORES

While it may seem like online shopping would be good for the environment, you actually have a smaller carbon footprint when you drive to a local store and make your purchases.

According to research findings published in Environmental Science & Technology, the total greenhouse gas footprints per item purchased was higher from strictly online sellers than it was from purchases made at local brick and mortar stores. Why? When shopping online, people tend to make smaller purchases at a time, resulting



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in multiple deliveries and more packaging. Also, sometimes items in a single order will come from different warehouses, causing more greenhouse gas emissions per item.

If you are going to do your shopping online, purchase from local businesses that deliver directly from their store.

## BUY LOCAL PRODUCTS

Don't just shop at local stores,

whenever possible, buy products that are locally made or harvested. This way less fuel is spent delivering the products to you. It also wastes fewer natural resources.

## BUY FOOD IN SEASON

When you buy food out of season, it has to be shipped from far away. Keep track of what foods are in season and eat them only when you can get them locally grown. If there is

one in your area, join a collective to purchase locally grown foods.

## RECYCLE AND REUSE

When you're shopping, give preference to items that use recycled packaging. There will usually be a recycling symbol on the packaging if such materials are used.

Invest in sturdy tote bags made of nylon or cloth for shopping instead of the dispos-

able paper or plastic bags.

## COMBINE TRIPS

Greener Ideal website recommends reducing the number of trips you take to the grocery store. Doing this saves you fuel because you will make fewer trips. Make a list before you go shopping and buy more at one time. Instead of driving to the store three times in a week to get milk, buy three gallons once a week.



# Boost Local Businesses

Shopping local is all about community. It's about living in your community, making your community better and healthier, supporting your neighbors.

It's something that is much bigger than just deciding where you are going to buy your toothpaste. It's about being a part of your community, your town and your region. It's why being a local shopper also means being a local storyteller.

When you tell the stories of your experiences shopping locally, you don't just help the small businesses you bought from. You also help others around you become more savvy local shoppers and spread the movement beyond yourself.

## SHARE YOUR STORIES

McKinsey & Co. studied the inclusive consumer in 2021-22. Inclusive consumers are those who are more likely to shop local and who are more likely to shop businesses owned by under-represented communities.

One of the things they said in their report was that inclusive consumers -- local shoppers -- want to know the stories of those who own or found the businesses. They want to know what the owner's mission is. They're far more likely to visit a business if there are stories that



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interest them.

While it is the job of a business to tell their stories, you can help to spread the word. Did you have a unique experience at a store? Did you connect with an owner or a manager who was able to customize their offerings for you? Share that story. Tell it to your friends. Post about it on social media. Write a letter to your local newspaper. Call into a local radio show. Email the

business itself to give them an opportunity to use your words as a testimonial.

## LEAVE REVIEWS

Real consumer reviews that go beyond a thumbs up or thumbs down can do a lot for a local business. When you've had a good experience (or even when you've had a bad experience), leave a detailed, honest and fair review.

Keep in mind that you're not

just helping local businesses, you are also helping others become local shoppers. It's why it is important that your reviews are authentic.

## PICTURES PAINT 1,000 WORDS

You don't even have to use a lot of words in order to spread the word. Few people are ever without a camera because of the popularity of smartphones. Did you score an awesome find

at a local store? Take a picture. Take a selfie with a local artisan. Make a TikTok video of you and your date enjoying a local meal.

Post those pictures and videos on your social media and tag the pages of the businesses where you took the pictures. Local shoppers like you get a lot of their information from Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. Help to provide the answers they need.



# Shop at Local Holiday Events

Holiday shopping doesn't have to be a chore. In fact, depending on where you go, it can be an exciting experience that creates memories or becomes part of your family's traditions.

Check out local shopping events ranging from fairs to festivals to traditional Christmas markets featuring the work of local artisans.

## ARTS AND CRAFT FAIRS

Creative crafters and fine artists in your community have likely spent the year creating items that they offer at art shows and craft fairs in the months leading up to the holiday season. It's a great way to purchase unique gifts while supporting individuals in your community.

Check out sites like [FairsandFestivals.net](https://fairsandfestivals.net), where you can search for art fairs and craft shows within a certain mile radius of your home or browse by state.

Before you go, check out the fair's website and see what vendors will be there. Many will have Instagram pages and you can plan your shopping and pick out gifts. If you want to go when it is a little slower and you can talk to vendors and perhaps discuss custom



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work, the afternoons are usually less crammed.

Take both cash and credit cards. While most vendors will take credit cards, sometimes a venue has limited WiFi access that can make processing those cards slow.

Also, this isn't the place to haggle. Think of them as more of a pop-up retail store than a garage sale.

## HOLIDAY FESTIVALS

Holiday festivals — either indoor or outdoor — often

combine many elements of the season. They may incorporate parades, lights, family activities, music and, of course, shopping. It's the sort of shopping that can be a fun activity for the whole family as you can include such things as a visit to Santa or a chance to ice skate.

Yes, you might have to get sneaky about some of your purchases and hide them from the intended recipient, but it can also be fun to see exactly what they are most

interested in.

## CHRISTMAS MARKETS

Christmas markets started out as a German tradition during the Middle Ages, according to National Geographic.

Downtown squares get turned into holiday extravaganzas with lights, bunting and vendors selling holiday decor such as ornaments or Nativity scene figurines. Holiday treats and drinks are sold in the streets and carol-

ers or piped-in music keeps things festive.

In non-pandemic years, Germany alone has 2,500 to 3,000 Christmas markets, says National Geographic.

Thankfully for the rest of us, the tradition has spread not only throughout Europe but to the United States.

If there is a Christmas market near you, it is a great way to shop local and purchase your holiday decor and gifts while enjoying an old, cultural tradition.





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# Gift Local Experiences

Too often, stuff ends up in landfills because people don't have room or use for them. So, when you are thinking about holiday presents, consider gifting a local experience.

It will give the recipient memories of a great time while also supporting people in your local community.

## ART, MUSIC AND THEATER

After two years of in-person performing arts being closed down, arts organizations are back and eager to welcome audiences back into their spaces. Many of them are creating special packages with built-in flexibility or offer holiday gift packages.

Check out your local symphony, community band, art collective, dance troupe, opera house or community, regional or touring house theaters. Buy tickets to a single performance or season flex tickets.

Consider creating a package that caters to the unique interests of the people on your gift list. For example, if your sister enjoys stand-up comedy, consider getting her two tickets to a local comedy club with a gift certificate to a nearby restaurant.

## SPORTING EVENTS

While the holidays feature big national games, you can bring some delight to sports fans by purchasing them tickets to local games. Whether it is a nearby college, a minor league baseball team, the local hockey team, find out who is playing what in your community. There may also be such things as pickleball tournaments or a golf tournament at a

local course.

Put together a package that includes game tickets, some team swag or even signed memorabilia from local stars.

## MUSEUMS AND LANDMARKS

What is your town known for? Was it the site of a historical Civil War battle? Does it have a museum of something unusual? Is there unique architecture or home tours? Often people living near tourist attractions or the home to special events and festivals never get the chance to visit them.

Consider gifting people on your list passes to a museum, a state park or a historical museum. If there is a major festival — whether a music festival or an ode to turkey gizzards — buy them tickets or create a coupon promising to go with them.

## CURATED EXPERIENCES

Perhaps you want to give something a

little different, something unusual or adventurous. Travel agencies and organizations put together curated local experiences. They can make great gifts for those who want to be a tourist in their own town.

The website “Let’s Roam” offers scavenger hunts, ghost hunts and bar crawls in a variety of communities. City Hunt will create custom scavenger hunts in your town that can be themed to holidays or many other events. Have them create a hunt that you can give to everyone local on your list.

Or, if you know your community well, curate unique experiences yourself as gifts. Organize a personal cooking class with a local chef, schedule a photo-shoot at iconic local settings with a local photographer, arrange for a local stylist to provide a beauty consultation or makeover, or hire a journalist from your local newspaper to interview your gift recipient and create a memory book.



# Locally Printed Holiday Cards

When it comes to holiday cards, shopping local isn't only good for your community, it can provide you with unique, personalized communications that will be treasured and shared.

Print shops may not be the first place you think of when you think shop local, and yet, these are businesses that hire creative designers and can provide personalized service. Many of them will even deliver your cards once they are done.

Likewise, local art galleries are also a source for unique cards or art that you can combine with your holiday letters.

## DESIGN YOUR OWN

Creative souls may want to design their own holiday cards. With online templates, it can be easy to do. You can pull from a variety of public clip art, your own art or purchase designs from local artists and create a card that is unique to you and your family.

However, printing off 50 of those colorful cards from your home printer can cost a fortune in ink cartridges. It also leaves you with a lot of folding and collating. It's why you can turn to local print shops. An advantage to being able to personally deliver a card and



talk to someone about what you want is that they might be able to make suggestions to help you achieve the exact look that you want.

Addy Fulmer of TPI Solutions, a print shop in Massachusetts, encourages people to shop local and print local, and they network with other local, small businesses who can also provide specialty cards or stationery.

"If you have an idea for your holiday card, we can make it happen," she wrote. "We can design it, print it and even mail it if you so desire."

It's an offer you're likely to find from any of your local print shops.

## PHOTOS

Perhaps you want to send out a photo postcard. Consider hiring a local pho-

tographer to capture your family in several different fun holiday poses wearing matching outfits or silly hats.

Once you have the photos, you can design your own card or take them in to a print shop and ask them to put them together in a lovely design.

## CUSTOMIZED ITEMS

Another bonus to having

your holiday cards designed by a local shop is that you can turn to them for other customized goods. Ask them to make you matching gift tags or wrapping paper. Maybe you want notecards that you can use throughout the year or blank thank-you notes to use after the holidays are over.

The sky is the limit when you call upon the talents of your local print businesses.



# Black-Owned Businesses

The way we shop communicates the values that we have. While any of us alone may not be able to make a difference with our dollars, together we are able to make change.

During the pandemic, small businesses were hard hit and the ones that were hit the hardest were those owned by under-represented communities. According to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Black-owned businesses closed at twice the rate of white-owned ones. Things that were already unequal became more unequal.

McKinsey & Co. conducted research into the inclusive shopper in 2021. As part of their background research, they reported that while 14% of the U.S. population identifies as Black, Black-owned businesses received less than 1.5% of all retail spending in 2020.

This holiday season, you can help mitigate historic financial discrimination against Black-owned businesses and communities by directing some of your spending dollars in that direction.

## WHY SHOP BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES?

There are many reasons to direct your spending dollars to under-represented communities. Green America lists the



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following:

- Helping to close the racial wealth gap caused by Jim Crow-era practices that prevented wealth building.
- Strengthening local economies, especially those businesses that are still half as likely to receive bank loans as white businesses.
- Fostering job creation among a community that was harder hit by unemployment

during the pandemic than any other community.

- Promoting accessibility by supporting businesses that are more likely to provide overlooked services such as representative toys or skin and hair care for people of color.

## HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES?

Beyond the obvious of

spending your money at Black-owned shops, Small Business Trends suggests several ways to help them succeed. Set aside money in your budget that is specifically earmarked to be spent at Black-owned businesses. Commit to having a certain percentage of your holiday shopping dollars go to these businesses.

After shopping, help to promote the businesses. Tell your

friends and families about the shops and your experience there. Post about them in your social media, such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok make up important marketing channels for small businesses.

Post positive, authentic and detailed reviews on places like Google or Yelp.

Mel Rhoden, a life purpose coach, recommends building a relationship with the Black-owned businesses that you shop at. Don't just have it be a checkmark on a good deeds list, but be a true partner and ally. Ask what is needed and take some time to get to know the owners and managers. "I don't want your support just because I'm Black," he wrote. "I want it because you believe in me and my business's mission, vision and values."

## HOW TO FIND BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES

Like many things these days, the easiest way to find Black-owned businesses might be to search online and see if there is a local organization that lists and promotes businesses owned by underrepresented populations.

If you cannot find one, there are some national and federal organizations that are promoting and supporting Black-owned businesses. Some of them include:

- Black Founders.
- Minority Business Certifications.
- Black-Owned Everything.
- Coalition to Back Black Businesses.



# Finding Local Businesses

Your television, social media feed and junk mail is likely filled with advertisements for big box stores and national chains. Information about them is easy to access and research is easy.

Learning about local businesses, what they offer and the quality of their services can be a bit more challenging, but it's an important part of being a local shopper who contributes to the financial health of your community.

## GO EXPLORE

One boon to local shopping is the healthy benefits of getting out and walking rather than just shopping from your computer. Money Crashers suggests that people who want to learn more about small businesses in their community should set aside a day to go exploring in their own town. They recommend doing it on foot or riding a bike.

The website DiscoveryMap.com creates illustrated maps of many towns. You can call up a colorful map on your phone and tablet and use it to find places to stay, eat, shop and entertain yourself.

Another place to get local maps is your local chamber of commerce. They may have maps or even shopping guides. Make them the first stop on your expedition.



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Take note of stores you find. Visit them and talk to the people who work there. Ask how long they've been in the community and what they do best.

## HELPFUL PHONE APPS

Your phone can be a helpful tool when it comes to trying to learn about local businesses. There are many apps offering a variety of services. Most will provide you with basic informa-

tion such as operating hours, addresses, phone numbers and website addresses.

Consider using some of these:

- **Google Maps.** While it won't sort local from national shops, it will make lists of businesses in your community and help you find what stores are where. You can use it to search for exactly what you are looking for and then read reviews of the

stores you are considering shopping at.

- **Facebook.** Search for "local small businesses" and see what groups pop up. If you can find one with business owners, it can be a great way to interact directly with them, asking the questions you have or seeing what other local shoppers have to say.

- **Nextdoor.** This social media app can help you find small

businesses and inform you what your neighbors think of them. It also has a businesses tab where you can find local deals and information about nearby businesses.

- **Yelp.** With consumer reviews, Yelp is a way to start your research of a local business. What have other people experienced there? What do your neighbors love? Hate? Yelp will tell you.