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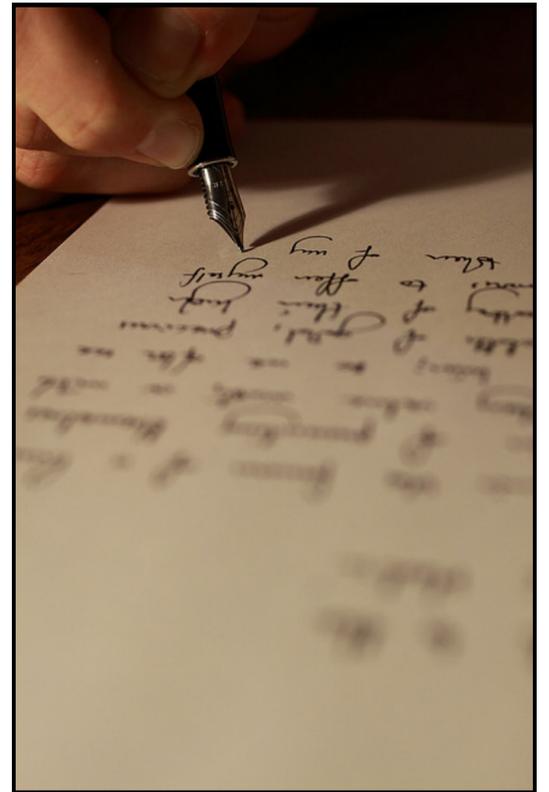
Eco Friendly Grad Gifts

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As graduation time nears, friends and family are deciding how to celebrate the accomplishments of the hard working graduates in their lives. For many, this **includes gift giving**. The problem is that, without knowing it, those gifts may have a negative impact on global health, human rights and the environment. By considering this potential impact in advance, well-wishers can give an eco friendly gift that is both appreciated and ethical. This Hearts guide to giving graduates meaningful, ethical gifts to celebrate their accomplishments will make it simple.

Quick Guide: Impact of Graduation Gifts

- **6.6 million grads every spring:** For the 2012/13 school year, there will be over 6.6 million grads: 3,197,300 high school; 899,000 associate degree; 1,791,000 bachelor degree; and 741,000 graduate degrees.^[i]
- **\$4.7 billion spent for graduation gifts:** On average, Americans spend \$4.7 billion on grad gifts – about \$100 each.^[ii] Imagine the positive impact **economically ethical grad gifts** could have!
- **Most common graduation gift ideas:** While cash is the most popular gift, clothes and electronics remain common gifts for graduates.^[iii]
- **Grad gifts funding sweatshops and human rights abuses?** Electronics have a strong probability of being made with conflict minerals, fuelling war and human rights abuses in the Congo.^[iv] Clothes may have been made in sweatshops by child laborers.^[v] In other words, the \$100 price tag doesn't come close to measuring the human cost for that item, which was initially purchased with good intentions. It's a gift giver's paradox.



Take Action! Giving Eco Friendly Gifts

1. **Give lasting and treasured gifts:** Part of giving eco friendly gifts is considering how long the item will be functional, and to question what happens to it afterwards. Here are some green graduation gift ideas:
 - **Pass on a treasured (upcycled!) family keepsake:** Get it engraved if appropriate. Write about the history of the item on beautiful recycled paper (read more about recycled paper on [Conservatree](#)) and include it so the story can also be passed on to future generations.
 - **Write a special note to share how proud you are of your grad:** Include some **inspirational quotes** and personal photos. Get inspiration from the story of the dad who gave his daughter the **Dr. Seuss book signed by all of her grade school teachers**. Lasting gifts don't have to cost a lot of money.
 - **Share a meaningful experience together:** Take your grad to her/his favorite restaurant where you share special memories. Go to an event, show, concert, festival together that you otherwise wouldn't. If you don't live close-by, make your attendance at the graduation ceremony your gift (choose eco-friendly transportation). Create a fun and special memory that will last a lifetime by focusing on a shared experience rather than a physical gift.
2. **Graduation gift ideas with broader impact:** Think outside the box to give a gift that has a global impact. For example:
 - **Give a 'gift from the heart' from [Trees for Life International](#).** Choose from a range of options including educational materials, computers, or sending a girl to school. This is a great way to share your celebration with someone less fortunate.
 - **Fair trade favorites:** If the graduate is heading off to live on their own, fill a useful container with their favorite fair trade products (honey, chocolate, coffee, tea, sugar, rice, olive oil). For ideas, check out [Fair Trade USA](#).
 - **Make a unique necklace from [Dogearred Jewels & Gifts](#).** Your gift will have special meaning and it will also support a good cause, supporting community through [Karma in Action](#).
 - **Buy sweatshop-free clothing:** If you buy clothes for a gift, buy sweat-free and fair trade products. [Green America](#) has [list of sweat-free green businesses](#).
3. **Education as a political action:** Empower others through education. Donate to an educational charity or aspiring student in honor of the graduate. Find a list of educational charities on [Charity Navigator](#). For education in developing countries, [GiveWell](#) recommends [Pratham](#) in India. At the post-secondary level, the [UN affiliated University of the People](#) provides individuals in need from around the world with almost-free access to post-secondary studies. You can donate to one of [UoPeople's scholarship funds](#). Education is a powerful and lasting eco friendly gift that will honor your graduate in countless ways.



Dig Deeper: Why Give Eco Friendly Gifts?

- Americans continue to consume in an unsustainable way. Read how the US ranks lowest in the National Geographic's [Greendex 2012](#) report.
- Read [7 Resources for Finding Out About the Secret Lives of Your Stuff](#) from the Story of Stuff Project website. It's a great jumping off point for lots more information about the impact your 'stuff' has on the world.
- The [Green America's Responsible Shopper Guide](#) will help you learn more so that you can take greener actions in your daily life.

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