

50 Alternatives to Wrapping Paper

by Sheri Radford / Dec 10, 2020

There are lots of fun and eco-friendly replacements for traditional wrapping paper—the only limit is your imagination

Metallic wrapping paper, paper with glitter or foil, tissue paper, shiny paper gift bags, sticky tape—none of it can be recycled. So what's a sustainably minded gift-giver supposed to do? Get creative!

To kick-start your creativity, we present 50 ideas for alternatives to traditional store-bought wrapping paper.

1. Fabric gift bag. [Etsy](#) has more sizes and styles of bag than you can imagine, made from fabrics patterned with everything from snowflakes to *Star Wars*. Fabric bags can be reused year after year, and they make wrapping quick and easy.

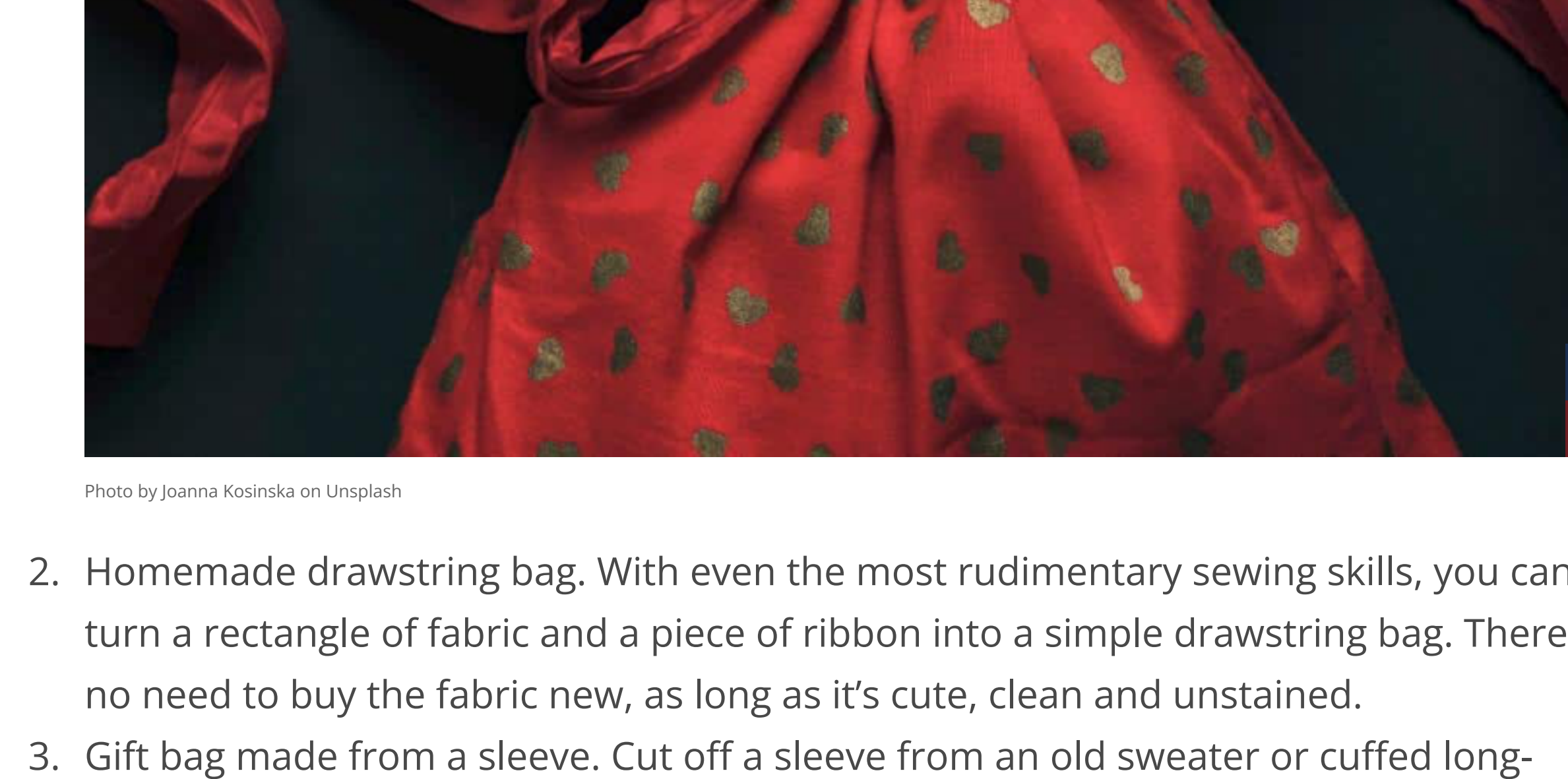


Photo by Joanna Kosinska on Unsplash

2. Homemade drawstring bag. With even the most rudimentary sewing skills, you can turn a rectangle of fabric and a piece of ribbon into a simple drawstring bag. There's no need to buy the fabric new, as long as it's cute, clean and unstained.

3. Gift bag made from a sleeve. Cut off a sleeve from an old sweater or cuff long-sleeve shirt, stitch the cut edges together, and you've created the perfect bag for a wine bottle.

4. Colourful pillowcase. It's ideal for wrapping a large or awkwardly shaped item, and it functions as a bonus gift.

5. Square of fabric. Either do a quick hem around the fabric's edges, or trim the edges with pinking shears. Then find inspiration in furoshiki, which is the Japanese art of fabric gift wrapping, and tie the square of fabric around the gift. Take a look at [these gorgeous knot-wraps from Lush](#).



LUSH

6. Kids' drawings or paintings. Grandparents, in particular, love this, plus it allows you to declutter the artwork from your budding Picasso.

7. Plain brown paper. Cut open a paper grocery bag and turn it inside out to get plain brown paper for wrapping. Use ribbon to tie on fresh greenery, bells, candy canes, or other seasonal decorations or tree ornaments. Or glue on snowflakes cut out from white paper.

8. Brown paper stamped with fun patterns. Kids love helping with this DIY project, especially if they can make the stamps themselves from potatoes.

9. Homemade Christmas cracker. Use a cardboard roll, homemade wrapping paper, and ribbon tied around either end. For the full cheesy-Christmas-cracker experience, also tuck in a groan-worthy holiday joke and homemade paper crown.

10. Store shopping bag. To cover up a logo, glue on an image cut out from an old holiday card.

11. Paper printed with your own design. On the back of paper scavenged from the recycling bin, print personal messages, family photos or favourite memes.

12. Plain white paper. Decorate it with colourful washi tape, which is usually made from hemp and bamboo and can be composted or recycled.



Photo by DiBette Henderson on Unsplash

13. Reused cardboard box. Decorate it using stickers, felt pens, paint or pictures cut out from magazines or holiday cards.

14. Cardboard roll. Cut it down to the right length, tuck the gift inside, then fold in the ends and tie everything in place with a cheerful ribbon.

15. Newspaper comics. The old standby never goes out of style, even if the funny pages—and the newspapers themselves—keep shrinking.

16. Newspaper puzzle page. A cruciverbalist (14-letter word meaning "person skilled at creating or solving crossword puzzles") or sudoku fan will appreciate this, especially if you leave the puzzle intact for them to solve afterwards.

17. Plain newspaper. Choose a page with a fitting (or funny) headline or an auspicious horoscope, and tie in place with a colourful ribbon.

18. Foreign language newspaper. Select a country that holds special meaning for the recipient.

19. Recycled lace overtop of plain paper. The end result is simple but elegant.

20. Tea towel. For a charming touch, find a vintage tea towel from the recipient's favourite travel destination.

21. Tin container. Thrift stores always have an abundance of cute tea tins and cookie tins.

22. Dish cloths. Wrap a set of small items in matching dish cloths.

23. Old map. Find a map of a place that holds special meaning for the recipient.

24. Pouches, dust bags or fancy boxes from other purchases. Sometimes the packaging really is too nice to throw away, so reuse it instead.

25. Clay flower pot. Flip over the bottom dish, place it on top of the pot, and tie it in place.

26. Pair of festive socks. Wrap two items that go together in a cute pair of seasonal socks.

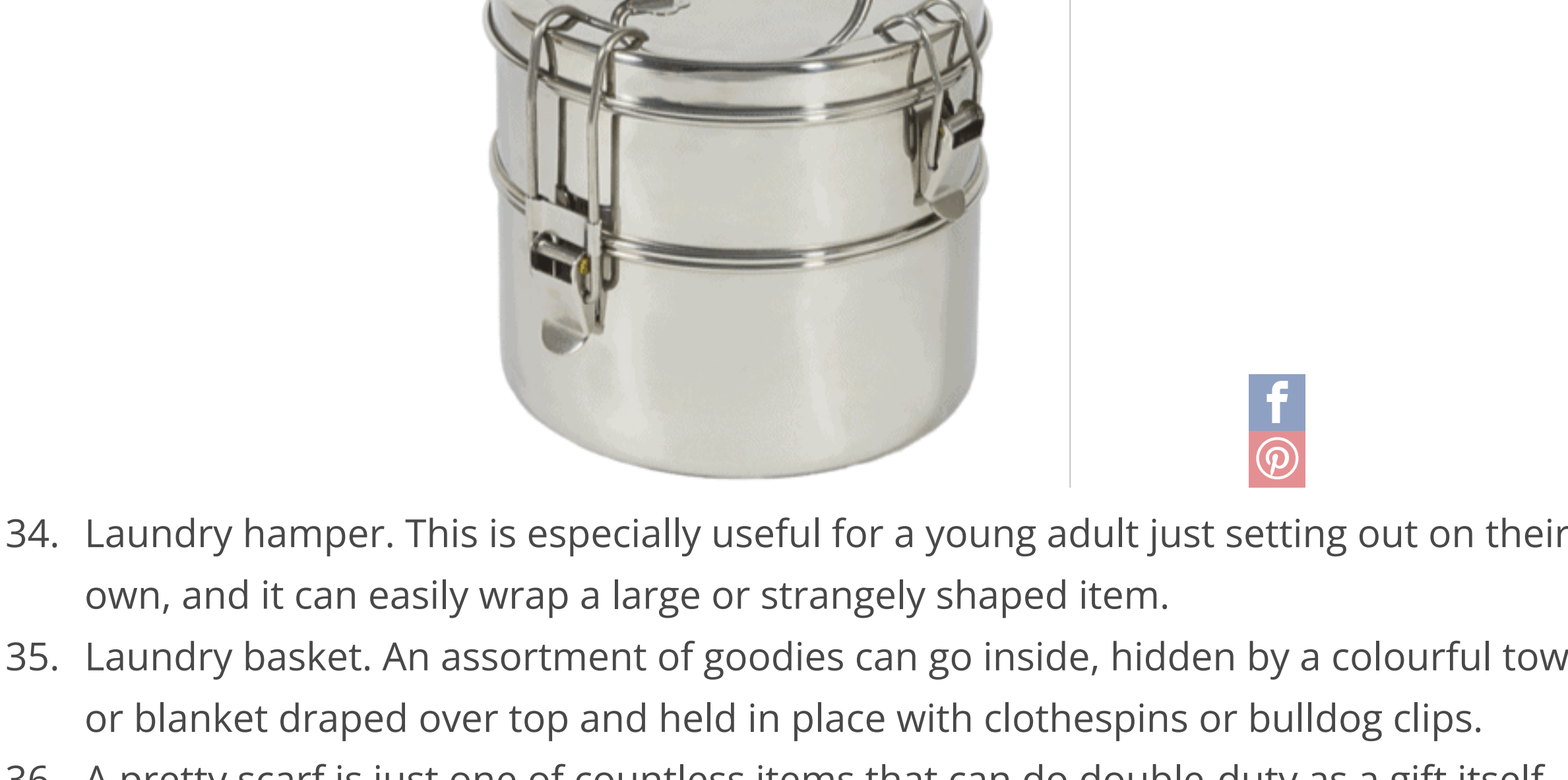
27. Old sheet music. Search through a thrift shop for sheet music to a beloved song.

28. Pages from damaged books. These can be used as wrapping paper or folded into small gift boxes. Decorate the pages with stamps or washi tape.

29. Pages from old calendars. There's a calendar out there for every obscure taste, from [chickens](#) to [lighthouses](#).

30. Recycled glass jar. Glue on a handwritten label, tie a piece of fabric on top, and add a cute touch by also attaching a candy cane or cinnamon stick.

31. Packing cube. Travellers who want to stay organized swear by packing cubes such as [this one from MEC](#).



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32. Christmas stocking. Places like [Make on Granville Island](#) can even [embroider a name on the stocking](#).

33. Tiffin box. This tiered box, usually made of steel, is used in many Asian countries to carry a hot lunch. It's also ideal for holding several small gifts. We like [this one from Well.ca](#).



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34. Laundry hamper. This is especially useful for a young adult just setting out on their own, and it can easily wrap a large or strangely shaped item.

35. Laundry basket. An assortment of goodies can go inside, hidden by a colourful towel or blanket draped over top and held in place with clothespins or bulldog clips.

36. A pretty scarf is just one of countless items that can do double-duty as a gift itself and wrapping for another gift. Here are a few more:

37. Bandana or handkerchief.

38. Reusable cloth produce bag.

39. Covered bowl.

40. Cloth napkin.

41. Tablecloth.

42. Sheet.

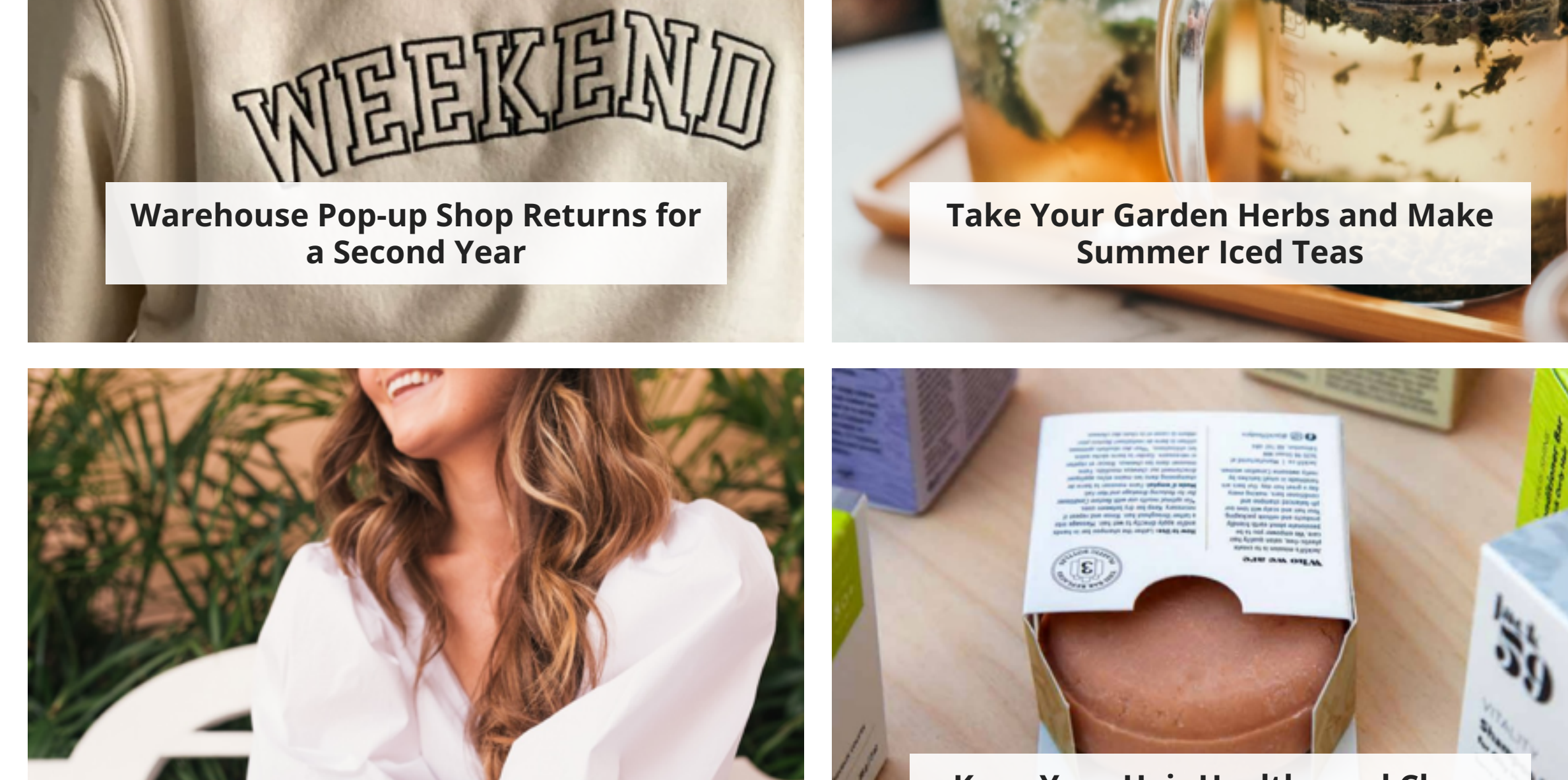
43. Bath towel.

44. Pencil case.

45. Cosmetics bag.

46. Hat box.

47. Ditty bag. We like [this one from MEC](#).



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48. Wicker basket.

49. Storage basket.

50. Fleece blanket.

Sometimes no wrapping at all is the most fun. A series of clues in a treasure hunt can lead the recipient to a gift tucked away in a closet or garage.

Also, get creative in avoiding sticky tape. Ribbon can be reused year after year.

Sometimes string or twine adds an elegant touch. A pair of holiday-patterned shoelaces doubles as a fun gift. Fabrics can be pinned in place using safety pins or a brooch. For a small gift, a few colourful hair elastics or a single scrunchie may be enough to hold everything in place. For a slightly larger gift, a single stretchy headband might do the trick.

And never forget that Grandma was right. You can carefully reuse the wrapping paper, tissue paper and paper gift bags from any gifts you receive. (But don't forget to remove the original giver's tag.)

Now that's a wrap!

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