



ENVIRONMENT

Christmas Strategies©

by Valentine Rinner

Vocabulary & pronunciation study by

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Words are explained alongside the text

Stressed syllables are underlined and in bold*

Hi everyone! Welcome to this week's **episode** of Ten Minutes for the Planet. **Christmas** is coming up and with it the **numerous Black Friday ads**, also what seems like **entire forests** are being sold on our **sidewalks** - all the decorations, the **wrappings**, the **festive** foods, etc.

I don't know about you but I'm always a bit **torn** when such a **consumer-oriented** time of the year comes up. I **absolutely** want to join in the Christmas fun but every time I see people coming out of stores with **massive amounts** of triple **layered** gift-wrappings and Christmas trees with **fake** snow - all of which will end up in the **trash** in a few weeks - a part of me doesn't **actually** find it 100% fun.

So over the years I've come up with a few **strategies** to have a more planet-friendly Christmas, without **sacrificing** or **spoiling** the fun, and even **increasing** it! I'll share a couple of them with you today.

My first strategy **concerns** the Christmas tree. In France each year we buy over 5 **million natural** trees and over 1 million **artificial** ones. The good news is that in France there has been legislation, for 15 years, concerning Christmas tree production - mostly 'Épicea' trees - and production is now more **respectful**.

However we are seeing an **increase** of **imported** trees mostly 'Nordmann' trees from Northern or Eastern **Europe**. This means more pollution from transportation and **variable** levels of production **transparency**. Artificial trees are not much better as they are made out of highly

Black Friday (n.) Friday after Thanksgiving, when shops reduce the price of goods in order to attract customers who want to start their Christmas shopping

ad (n.) advertisement

sidewalk (n.) pavement

wrapping (n.) paper or plastic that covers or protects something

torn (adj.) divided, in conflict

to layer (vb.) to arrange pieces of something on top of each other

fake (adj.) not real but made to look real

trash (n.) container for refuse

actually (adv.) in fact, really

to spoil (spoilt-spoilt) (vb.) to ruin, affect in a bad way

polluting materials and are usually imported from East **Asia**.

So can I suggest two options, the first one is to buy your natural French Christmas tree in a pot, spend Christmas with it and replant it in your garden or a **relative** or friend's garden after New Year. It's actually really fun to do this, **especially** if you leave the decorations on it while you replant it. The second option, which I have opted for this year, is to buy a large Christmas tree branch. They are usually **available** for only a few **euros** everywhere that sells trees. When you turn the branch upside down it really does look like a full tree and smells like one, with the **advantage** of taking up less space in my small **apartment**.

My second **major** planet-friendly Christmas strategy relates to gifts. With an **average** of almost 300 € per person spent on Christmas gifts, the market is huge and **companies** know it, ads are everywhere **prompting** us to buy more and more things. And when we do, it is often without thinking just because we feel like we have to, and it's more **stuff**, wrapped in even more layers than **usual** – think **Rowan Atkinson** style in *Love Actually*.

My strategy to get out of this craziness is to make my own gifts. Hmm I can already hear you **muttering**... but no it doesn't take more time than **navigating** through 5 or 6 **different** shops in the middle of a crowd, **lining up** and **recuperating** shopping. And it doesn't mean **ugly** homemade **scarves** or painted pasta **necklaces** either.

There are lots of beginner **DIY** ideas and **tutorials** on the web. There is also a whole **bunch** of ideas in your own head. It simply **requires** you to **take** an hour **off**, close your phone and **laptop**, put some nice music on, make yourself a hot **chocolate**, sit on the **couch** and start a little list.

My strategy here is to settle on a basic gift theme that I **customize depending** on the **recipient**. This year's Christmas Eve will see customized bath salts and all sorts of massage oils. **Once** I have the right idea for the right person, it just takes 10 minutes to make each one and most of the **ingredients** are already sitting in my kitchen or bathroom **cupboards**: **olive** or **almond** oils, **oatmeal** flakes, **vanilla pods**, glass jars, etc. I then get my **craft box** out for eclectic decorations and **up-cycling** wrappings.

relative (n.) member of one's family

average (n.) usual amount

to prompt (vb.) to encourage

stuff (n.) things

to mutter (vb.) to murmur complainingly

to navigate (vb.) to make one's way over or through

to line up (phrasal vb.) to queue

ugly (adj.) unattractive

scarf (plural: **scarves**) (n.) neck garment

necklace (n.) piece of jewellery worn around the neck

DIY = do-it-yourself

tutorial (n.) special session of teaching or instruction

bunch of (n.) large number of

to take off (took-taken) (phrasal vb.) to use a period of time for a purpose that is different from what a person usually does

laptop (n.) portable microcomputer small enough to rest on the user's lap or thighs

couch (n.) sofa

recipient (n.) receiver

once (conj.) as soon as

oatmeal (n.) ground oats

pod (n.) seedcase

craft box (n.) tools used for making decorative objects by hand

to up-cycle (vb.) to recycle a disposable product into an object of greater value

Now it's your turn to **dig out** the **creativity** in you! But first start with that **cozy** hot chocolate...

Bye everyone! **Merry** Christmas! And see you next week for a new episode of Ten Minutes for the Planet.

to dig out (dug-dug) (phrasal vb.)
to rediscover, produce

cozy (adj.) comfortable,
pleasant, and inviting

***Tip!**

The following words contain silent letters:

a(l)mond, Chris(t)mas, cu(p)board, (h)our, (k)now, throu(gh), (w)hole, (w)rapping