



SHOEBOX GIFT IDEAS (AGE 2-4)



SPECIAL ITEM: Something to immediately capture the child's attention e.g. a cuddly toy, large toy car or truck, a rag doll, a brightly coloured foam ball.



SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES: Pencil case; crayons; chunky pens and pencils; child friendly pencil sharpener; ruler; eraser; glue stick (not liquid glue); notebook; picture book; drawing pad; colouring book; solid paint palette and paint brushes set; pre-inked stampers; large stickers.



ACCESSORIES: Baseball cap; sunglasses; woolly hat, gloves, mittens, scarf; hair ties, bows and dress-up headbands; small backpack, handbag or drawstring bag; purse or wallet; reusable non-breakable containers e.g. cup, water bottle, plate, bowl; small items of clothing e.g. socks, flip-flops, T-shirt.



GAMES: Snap cards, simple puzzles with large pieces, stacking games, etc.

HYGIENE ITEMS: Toothbrush, hairbrush, comb, bar of soap, flannel, sponge, washmitt, bath scrunchy, rubber duck or bath toy.



TOYS: Skipping rope; small foam ball or tennis ball; large play bricks/building blocks; play people; large animal figures; dinosaurs; foldable play mat e.g. farm, zoo, city or racetrack; transport toys e.g. car, train, plane, truck or boat; plastic doll; hand or finger puppets; play dough (ideally with cookie cutters and play tools); toy tools; slinky; interactive toys that include push buttons, lights and noise (include extra batteries).

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS: Tambourine, shaker, bells, sports whistle, recorder, harmonica, slide whistle, tin whistle, finger drums, maracas, triangle, mini xylophone, kazoo, castanets.



A NOTE FROM YOU: Christmas card, note of greeting, photo of yourself/your family.



DO NOT INCLUDE: Items with very small parts; toothpaste, sweets, lotions and liquids; used or damaged items; war-related items; seeds, gum, chocolate or food items; religious or political literature; medicines, aerosol cans, sharp or fragile items.



SHOEBOX GIFT IDEAS (AGE 5-9)



SPECIAL ITEM: Something to immediately capture the child's attention e.g. a cuddly toy, large toy car or truck, a rag doll, a deflated football and pump, a solar-powered torch.



SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES: Pencil case; crayons; writing pens and pencils; colouring pens and pencils; highlighters; child friendly pencil sharpener; ruler; eraser; glue stick (not liquid glue); safety scissors; small adhesive tape; notebook; drawing pad; colouring book; solid paint palette and paint brushes set; pre-inked stampers; pavement chalk; whiteboard and dry wipe pens; stencils; mini Spirograph kit; solar calculator; stickers.

ACCESSORIES: Baseball cap; sunglasses; woolly hat, gloves, mittens, scarf; hair ties, bows and dress-up headbands; small backpack, handbag or drawstring bag; purse or wallet; children's jewellery, watch, reusable non-breakable containers e.g. cup, water bottle, plate, bowl; small items of clothing e.g. socks, flip-flops, T-shirt.

TOYS: Skipping rope; tennis ball; building bricks/Lego type kit; click together model; glider kit (non-military); bead kit; play people; animal figures; dinosaurs; foldable play mat e.g. farm, zoo, city or racetrack; transport toys e.g. car, train, plane, truck or boat; plastic doll; hand or finger puppets; play dough (ideally with cookie cutters and play tools); toy tools; slinky; yo-yo; dominoes; spinning top; kaleidoscope; toy binoculars; finger skateboard; wind-up or pull-back toy; bouncy ball; inflatable beach ball; small frisbee, small kite, interactive toys that include push buttons, lights and noise (include extra batteries).



GAMES: Card games, small puzzles, puzzle cubes, jacks, mini board games, etc.



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS:

Tambourine, shaker, bells, sports whistle, recorder, harmonica, slide whistle, tin whistle, finger drums, maracas, triangle, mini xylophone, kazoo, castanets.



HYGIENE ITEMS:

Toothbrush, hairbrush, comb, bar of soap, flannel, sponge, washmitt, chapstick, compact mirror (ensure protected).

A NOTE FROM YOU:

Christmas card, note of greeting, photo of yourself/your family.



DO NOT INCLUDE: Toothpaste, sweets, lotions and liquids; used or damaged items; war-related items; seeds, gum, chocolate or food items; religious or political literature; medicines, aerosol cans, sharp or fragile items.



SHOEBOX GIFT IDEAS (AGE 10-14)



SPECIAL ITEM:

Something to immediately capture their attention e.g. a cuddly toy, a deflated football and pump, a solar-powered torch.



SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES: Pencil case; crayons; writing pens and pencils; colouring pens and pencils; highlighters; pencil sharpener; ruler; eraser; glue stick (not liquid glue); scissors; small adhesive tape; notebook; colour by number or patterns colouring book; solid paint palette and paint brushes set; whiteboard and dry wipe pens; stencils; mini Spirograph kit; solar calculator; geometry set; compass (ensure sharp tip covered or in a box); mini scraper foil kit; chalk or oil pastel art sets; sketch book.

ACCESSORIES: Baseball cap; sunglasses; woolly hat, gloves, scarf; jewellery; hair ties and grips; fashion scarf; small backpack, handbag or drawstring bag; purse or wallet; football gloves; watch; keyring; magnets; small fishing kit; gardening kit with gloves and trowel (no seeds); brightly coloured rope or twine; small tool kit with work gloves (no knives); small sealed sewing kit; small bike repair kit; reusable non-breakable containers e.g. cup, water bottle, plate, bowl; small items of clothing e.g. socks, flip-flops, T-shirt.

TOYS: Skipping rope; tennis ball; building bricks/Lego type kit; click together model; glider kit (non-military); bead kit; transport toys e.g. car, train, plane, truck, boat; plastic doll; slinky; yo-yo; dominoes; spinning top; fidget spinner; mini bowling set; kaleidoscope; toy binoculars; finger skateboard; bouncy ball; inflatable beach ball; large punch balloons and pump; small frisbee; small kite; table tennis bats, ball and net; interactive toys that include push buttons, lights and noise (include extra batteries).



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS:

Tambourine, shaker, bells, sports whistle, recorder, harmonica, slide whistle, tin whistle, finger drums, maracas, triangle, mini xylophone, kazoo, castanets.



GAMES: Card games like Uno and Snap (including standard 4-suit playing cards from 2021); small puzzles; puzzle cube; mini board games; marbles; jacks; maze game with balls; ball on a string catching game; Etch-a-sketch.

HYGIENE ITEMS: Toothbrush, hairbrush, comb, bar of soap, flannel, sponge, washmitt, chapstick, compact mirror (ensure protected), emery board, nail clippers, push up deodorant stick (not liquid or aerosol), wash bag.



DO NOT INCLUDE: Toothpaste, sweets, lotions and liquids; used or damaged items; war-related items; seeds, gum, chocolate or food items; religious or political literature; medicines, aerosol cans, sharp or fragile items.

A NOTE FROM YOU:

Christmas card, note of greeting, photo of yourself/your family.



FURTHER INFORMATION

QUALITY CRAFTS: Including a homemade item is a great way to personalise your shoebox gift and send an extra special message of love.

IDEAS FOR QUALITY CRAFTS:

Knitted or crocheted hats, gloves, bags, purses, pencils cases, soft toys or puppets; cross stitched bookmarks; wooden toys; felt play boards; simple games e.g. noughts and crosses or magnetic fishing; friendship bracelets (woven with yarn or embroidery thread); fabric tote bags; handmade jewellery, hair clips or headbands; fabric covered notebooks and handmade cards. For more shoebox craft ideas visit: samaritans-purse.org.uk/occ-quality-crafts.

Please note: any stuffing used needs to be proper toy stuffing and not dried beans or newspaper, etc. Materials must be new or look new and not be worn, marked or damaged. Toys made from recycled wood are fine but crafts which are obviously made from recycled waste items such as bottle tops cannot be sent.



WHY WE PROCESS SHOEBOX GIFTS AND HOW WE PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF YOUR SHOEBOX WHILST PROCESSING IT:

Every year, at processing centres around the UK, teams of trained seasonal volunteers check the contents of each shoebox before it is sent to a child in need. Their aim is to keep each shoebox exactly as it was packed, by you, our generous supporters, while checking each item against a number of important criteria, such as:

- to make sure we comply with customs requirements of the countries we are sending to
- to make sure we respect the cultural and religious contexts of the communities we are sending to
- to ensure that the items packed are in a clean and safe condition for the child who will receive them.

Occasionally, we might need to remove an item that does not match one of these criteria.

Boxes are not split or shared out and if your box does not include anything from the 'do not include' list and ticks all the above, it will be sent just as it was packed.

Where possible, any items that need to be removed are donated to other charities.

Specially sourced filler items are added where a box is low on items or if something had to be removed.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CAN ITEMS WITH CAMOUFLAGE BE INCLUDED? If the child can wear or use the items without looking like a soldier, they are OK to include in your shoebox gift. Pink or coloured camouflage is safe as are pencils or wallets.

CAN RUBBER BALLS BE INCLUDED IF THEY HAVE LIQUID GLITTER INSIDE? No, these would be considered inappropriate because of the liquid.

IS LIP GLOSS OK TO PACK IN A SHOEBOX GIFT? Lip gloss is a liquid and can't be included. However, a chapstick or lipstick can go!

CAN GLOW STICKS GO IN A SHOEBOX GIFT? No, we are not able to send liquids of any kind.

HOW ABOUT LITTLE TOYS LIKE SPIDERS, BUGS, SNAKES, ETC.? These items are allowed unless they are extremely life-like and could frighten a child.

ARE WATER PISTOLS ALLOWED? We do not allow anything that resembles or could be mistaken for a weapon.

DO I NEED TO LEAVE LABELS AND PACKAGING ON MY ITEMS? Feel free to remove packaging as long as it does not contain information that is needed e.g. building instructions. We would also suggest leaving packaging on hygiene items e.g. toothbrushes and bars of soap.

CAN I INCLUDE TOOTHPASTE AND SWEETS IN MY SHOEBOX? Toothpaste and sweets are no longer considered appropriate items, as more exacting import regulations are starting to be implemented within the countries that receive UK shoeboxes. Detailed evidence of ingredients and expiry dates, which logistically cannot be supplied, will soon be a requirement. By removing sweets and toothpaste, we hope to prevent potential barriers and maintain the access to reach children in all receiving countries.

CAN WE INCLUDE A TOOLKIT WITH NAILS, SCREWS, SCREWDRIVERS, AND HAMMERS? Yes, for shoeboxes in the 10-14 age category. The only tools that cannot be included are saws or pocket-knives. Please ensure anything that is loose or sharp is wrapped so as not to harm the child when they put their hands in the shoebox.

CAN COMPACT MIRRORS GO IN A SHOEBOX GIFT? Yes. Compact mirrors can be included because if the glass shatters, it will be contained.

CAN I INCLUDE A SEWING KIT? Yes, for the 10-14 category. Please ensure anything that is loose or sharp is wrapped so as not to harm the child when they put their hands in the shoebox.

CAN MY NOTE INCLUDE MY ADDRESS? It's a personal choice really. Putting your own address in can sometimes lead to begging letters but on rare occasions can also lead to personal thank you messages. One alternative, if you are concerned, might be to use a neutral address such as a church or school. Whatever you do decide, photos of who sent the box always go down well and are often kept for years.

CAN WE INCLUDE REUSABLE SANITARY PADS? It's OK to include sanitary items (e.g. reusable pads) in shoeboxes for 10-14 year old girls if you would like to. Please do bear in mind that shoebox gifts are often opened in public settings where boys and girls are together. To minimise any potential embarrassment, we would suggest placing these at the bottom of the box.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

IS PLAY DOUGH OK TO PACK IN A SHOEBOX GIFT?

Yes, play dough can be included in your shoebox gift. However, some children might think it is edible, so it is best packed with cutters or as part of a kit.

WHY CAN'T WE SEND RELIGIOUS LITERATURE?

We do not send political or religious literature in shoeboxes as the gift itself should be simple and uncontentious in nature. This also allows the local church to manage sensitively the relations with their communities. Literature that comes from the donor's context and in the donor's language – including Christian content – can confuse and mislead the children. Instead Operation Christmas Child works hard to support the overseas churches to share the Christmas story of new life in Jesus in a child-friendly way both verbally and through The Greatest Gift and The Greatest Journey materials in the local language. Where local partners assess it's not appropriate to offer these materials, they don't do so.

IS CLOTHING OR FOOTWEAR ALLOWED IN MY SHOEBOX?

Small items like hats, gloves, socks, flip-flops or a T-shirt are fine to pack. We do not recommend that you add particularly large items of clothing or footwear to your shoebox, as they can take up a lot of room. Ideally, we want the child to receive a gift that has a good variety of items that they can love, learn from and play with.

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT CLIMATE TO PACK FOR?

Unfortunately, we are not able to tell you where your shoebox will be sent before you send it. However, it is our experience that items like hats and gloves are enjoyed in a range of climates. In fact, putting on these items is often the first thing a child does upon opening their shoebox gift. If you do have concerns, we suggest packing items that can be enjoyed wherever the box is sent.

CAN WE SEND CHILDREN'S BOOKS? Yes, books are allowed but please bear in mind that the children may not be able to read English so books with lots of pictures are best.

CAN WE SEND SECOND HAND ITEMS?

We cannot send obviously used items as most customs regulations require items to be new. Also, many children are more worldly wise than we realise and would be aware of the difference between someone's unwanted items and a box of brand new gifts bought just for them. We feel that as the children have so little they deserve the best we can offer.

ARE HANDMADE AND KNITTED ITEMS SUITABLE FOR SHOEBOXES?

Yes, high quality handmade items such as hats, gloves, scarves, bags, purses, pencil cases, puppets and toys can all be packed, providing any stuffing used is proper toy stuffing and not dried beans or newspaper etc. Toys made from recycled wood are also great gifts to pack, but crafts obviously made from waste items such as bottle tops cannot be sent.

CAN WE PACK PLAYING CARDS?

From 2021, 4-suit playing cards can be packed as well as other card games such as Snap or Uno.

Still got questions?

Get in touch at occ@samaritans-purse.org.uk or call 020 8559 1180