

# Swag Guidelines

**Tips and  
guidance on how  
to purchase  
sustainable swag.**



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A UNIT OF ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

# Key Things to Remember

- Always prioritize eco-friendly or socially sustainable options.
- Get an accurate count for merchandise to avoid extras.
- If apparel is involved, always get individuals' sizes ahead of time.
- When appropriate, don't date the item or brand it with event specifics so that any extras can be used in the future.
- Swag items should be useful, with minimal to no chance of sitting on a shelf or going straight into a waste bin.
- Certain common giveaways can be made greener simply by choosing a particular material or manufacturing process. For example:
  - Water bottles should be aluminum or steel, not plastic.
  - Choose natural fibers (cotton, linen, wool) over synthetics such as nylon or polyester.



# Key Questions

**Consider these questions when thinking about if you should purchase swag, and if so, what kind:**

- Is swag necessary to achieve your goals?
- Does this item fall under the category of “things people already have and don’t really need more of”?
- Where and by whom were the materials of this product made?
- What is the quality and lifespan of this particular item?
- Will people actually use this?
- Will it promote thoughtful consumption? Is the item useful or likely to end up at the back of a drawer or in the trash?
- What happens to the swag at the end of its life? How will it be disposed of?



# How to Prioritize Swag



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## Experiences (Avoid items)

- An experience rather than an item.
- Examples: repair station, how-to booth, photo booth, or gift card/ticket

## Useful and Ethical

- If purchasing new, consider durable products that recipients will use and that come from trusted sources.
- Examples: water bottles or towels

## Useless and Questionable

- Try to avoid single-use plastic or plastic-wrapped items.
- Avoid items with wires, a microchip, or a battery.
- Examples: candy, small electronics, balloons, or USB drives

## Upcycle/Reuse

- Upcycle/reuse booth.
- Examples: decorate and reuse existing flowerpots, host a clothing swap, or tie-dye old shirts

## Useful or Ethical

- Try to buy products that are at least useful or ethical.
- Goods that are made from recycled, compostable, or repurposed material.
- Examples: plants or LED lights



# Special Considerations

## Food and Special Events

### Food

- If providing food (including packaged foods), consider choosing:
  - Fair Trade, USDA Organic, or other third-party sustainability certifications.
  - Locally grown/produced foods and products.
  - Vegan or vegetarian options as they tend to have lower carbon and nitrogen footprints.

### Special Events

- Swag for a specific event:
  - Order items without dates printed on them so they can be reused for annual events and don't become outdated.
  - Who is receiving the item(s)? Do they have a choice to opt in or out to receive it?
  - Request or require RSVPs to gauge attendance and prevent overbuying of materials.

