*Include or not include?*

These frequently addressed items **ARE** allowed in shoebox gifts:

playing cards
batteries (in original packaging or with both ends taped)
wet wipes or plain alcohol wipes
toy spiders/bugs/snakes
superheroes or other licensed characters
items with company logos
all types of scissors
squirt guns (that don’t look like real guns)
glow sticks
compact mirrors
lip balm (non-medicated)
playdough (store bought)
solid stick deodorant
makeup (non-liquid)
adhesive bandages (non-medicated)
disposable or reusable feminine hygiene products
eating utensils
marbles
Bibles or other religious literature or symbols

Want to check on another item? Use our [Gift Look-up Tool.](https://www.samaritanspurse.org/operation-christmas-child/what-goes-in-my-shoebox-suggestions/#gift-search-tool)

These frequently addressed items **ARE NOT** allowed in shoebox gifts:

Vaseline®
scary items (things that will frighten a child rather than bring joy)
war-related items (such as toy soldiers, military vehicles, or wearable camouflage)
liquid paint sets or liquid glue
rubber balls with liquid filling
liquid lip gloss
matches or fire starters
seeds
sand/rocks/shells gathered from nature
all types of food, candy, or gum
medications or vitamins
toothpaste
nail polish
money or play money
baby powder
baking soda
razors
liquids or lotions
breakable items or glass containers
aerosol cans
used clothing or toys

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These frequently addressed items may or may not be allowed in shoebox gifts.

**Camouflage or Military-Related Items:** Wearable traditional camouflage is not allowed; pink or bright colored camouflage is OK. Camouflage pencils or other non-wearable items are likely fine to include. The words “Army,” “Navy,” etc. are also acceptable when not part of a wearable camouflage item or a military-related toy. Military games like Battleship® should be avoided.

**Tool Kits; Multi-tools (No Blades):** Tool kits are not recommended for shoebox gifts. Most standalone tools are OK to include, with the exception of knives, saws, or razor blades. Hammers, nails, screwdrivers, etc. are fine to include. Entire tool kits can create importation challenges, which are avoidable by opting to pack other toys instead of tools.

**Fishing and Sewing Kits:** Small fishing and sewing kits are fine to include in shoebox gifts. It is acceptable to upcycle clean label-free bottles, such as prescription bottles, to be used as containers for your kits. Small fishing hooks and sewing pins and needles are all fine to include in your kits.

**Homemade Maracas, Bean Bags, or Stuffed Toys:** Any homemade items with filling MUST have synthetic filling such as plastic beads or pellets. Rice, beans, rocks, aquarium gravel, sand, wood pellets, or any other organic filling are not allowed. A note regarding filling can be included for clarification during processing.

**Seashells:** Store-bought items such as jewelry, picture frames, or other décor that include shells should be fine to include. Seashells that were collected from nature, even when cleaned and polished, are not allowed in order to comply with customs regulations that prohibit this type of item from entering the country.

**Playdough, Slime, and Sand:** Commercially packaged playdough, slime, or kinetic sand are fine to include in shoebox gifts. Homemade playdough and slime are not considered appropriate. Packaged synthetic play sand shouldn’t create any problems.

**Soap:** At this time, there are no specific requirements for packing bar soap, but it’s worth noting that bar soap has become an item of increasing regulatory concern. It’s best to keep soap in original packaging with an expiration date of at least six months after National Collection Week. For the same reason, homemade bar soap is discouraged. That said, at this time, all types of bar soap are acceptable to pack, regardless of what kind or how it is packed. The only reason soap may need to be removed would be in the unlikely event it has grown mold or mildew, rendering it unsafe to send. This is a rare occurrence but can happen when soap and washcloths are placed together in air tight containers or plastic bags and stored at temperatures or in conditions ideal for organic growth.

**Chapstick and Deodorant:** Solid, non-medicated lip balms and deodorants are fine to include in shoebox gifts. Look for red flags such as drug facts with active ingredients of medication, which is not allowed in shoebox gifts. Liquid lip glosses or gel deodorants should not be packed into shoebox gifts.

**Alcohol Wipes and Bandages:** Plain alcohol wipes and adhesive bandages are fine to include in shoebox gifts. Avoid any bandages that are pre-medicated with antibiotic ointments. The word “antibacterial” does not necessarily indicate whether or not a bandage can be included. Consider packing fun, colorful bandages that the child might be more excited to see in their shoebox gift.

**Bugs, Snakes, etc.** Toy bugs and snakes, etc. are all fine to include in shoebox gifts. Avoid including items that might reasonably scare a child when opening the gift such as a frightening mask or grotesque toy. Understand that volunteers who process your gifts may retain a bit of personal discretion when considering what makes the item scary. We encourage you to pray over the decision to pack the item in question.