

Why are sweets wrapped?

From the sweeties.net wiki

Sweets are wrapped for practical reasons. Sugar takes up water from the air around it, and a wrapper helps keep a sweet the way its maker intended. Packaging also preserves aroma and flavour and makes sweets easier to ship and hand out.

Keeping moisture in its place

Much of a wrapper's work is about water. Sugar and caramel are hygroscopic, which means they take up water from the air. Water moves from wetter things to drier ones, so a hard boiled sweet, which holds very little water, draws moisture in from damp air, while a soft chew left out in dry air loses water and toughens: see [why does seaside rock go soft?](#) and [why do jelly sweets go hard?](#)

That is why chewy taffy, for example, is traditionally wrapped piece by piece in wax paper, to keep it soft.

What different wrappers do

Different materials do different jobs:

- **Wax paper** seals against air, moisture, dust and germs.
- **Cellophane** is valued for being see through and for resisting grease, smells and moisture, and it can often be resealed.
- **Polyethylene** film, sealed with heat, is used to make bags for bulk packs.
- **Aluminium foil** wraps chocolate and stops water vapour passing through, while being light and free of smell.
- **Vegetable parchment** lines boxes of fine chocolates.

The Quality Street story

Wrappers are part of some sweets' stories. When Harold Mackintosh launched Quality Street in 1936, he decided to wrap each sweet individually in coloured paper rather than separate them in costly boxes, and he introduced the world's first twist wrapping machine to do it. He chose a tin rather than a cardboard box so the smell of chocolate would rise as soon as it was opened.

The Toffee Penny caused trouble for years. Toffee is hygroscopic, and its cellophane wrapper stuck to it over time. In 1967, on the suggestion of a packaging manufacturer, William T. Robson, Mackintosh switched to a foil backed paper, known as Robson Wrap, which solved the problem.

More recently, in 2022 Nestlé announced that Quality Street would move from plastic wrappers to recyclable paper ones, to keep two billion wrappers a year out of landfill.

Wrapped or loose?

Plenty of sweets are sold unwrapped. Pick and mix is sold loose, and contamination by viruses or bacteria through sweets is unlikely, even unwrapped ones, partly because bacteria cannot multiply in the very dry, sweet environment of sweets. When Sweden's food agency approved loose sweets for ordinary shops in 1984, it required each variety to be kept in its own container and picked with a scoop or a small bucket. For keeping loose sweets at home, see [how should you store pick and mix?](#)

Toffee eclairs are a wrapped sweet, and you can find [SW047](#) in our pick and mix, with the full ingredients and allergens on its card.

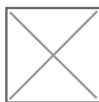
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