



Extension News Column

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The presents have been carefully selected and are awaiting the final dressing up before going under the Christmas tree. Is it necessary to spend another small fortune in wrapping the presents or are there a few ways to pinch pennies?

Of course there are always a few tricks to getting gorgeous packages. A \$7 bag and a \$5 bow do the job, but what can we do at home at a lower cost?

The first idea is to not do the wrapping yourself. If the store offers complimentary wrapping, take them up on it. Or if you are going to spend the money, take advantage of one of the local groups that wraps presents for a fee. They always do a nice job and you can rest assured that the money is going to a good cause.

I've always got a stack of wrapping papers that I bought off the after-Christmas sales rack. But there have also been some early specials on wrapping paper that I've seen this year. Keep a look out for these bargains.

Tissue paper comes in lots of colors and can be inexpensive, but the thin paper doesn't cover well. It is great for covering a white box, but anything with writing on it won't look good.

Why do the presents always have to be wrapped with Christmas paper? Use your imagination and look for unusual options. Consider using aluminum foil from the kitchen dressed up with a bright bow. Or the newspaper can come to your rescue. Wrap kids' presents in the Sunday comics, or wrap adult presents in the black and white pages topped with a brightly colored bow.

When my kids were smaller, we got end rolls from the newspaper and they drew pictures to wrap presents. The News Miner gives away end rolls left over after printing the news paper (only two per person can be obtained each day). It makes a perfect canvas to show off your children's artistic talents. The paper is very thin and care should be taken to avoid tearing. I've also used freezer paper in the same manner. A roll of paper (150 sq. ft.) costs about \$5. It is a nice heavy white paper that will also show off your children's talents.

Do you have a natural theme for your tree this year? One year I wrapped all the presents in brown craft paper. It can be purchased for \$9.50 for 130 sq. ft. I love to use the brown paper and dress it up with raffia, pine cones, and even a few spruce limbs. And the paper will hold up for repeated uses.

I often use natural items instead of bows. A sprig of evergreen, pine cones and a few dried berries and your packages will not only look good, the house will smell better.

Now what about ribbons? Bows purchased in a bag can usually be picked up for bargain prices, but think of unusual options. Try using several strands of yarn or even scraps of old trim instead of ribbons. Raffia works as well as and is less expensive than ribbon.

Dress up the package with peppermints or other wrapped candies taped to the package. I've made a Christmas tree shape, or even an initial on the package. Just glue, or tape in place.

If you like to use sacks, there are bargains to be had here. Course, the obvious thing is to save the bags from year to year and re-use them. I've taken wrapping paper and wrapped a box taping only one end. Slip it off the box, and you've made a custom sack to put a package in. The paper is thinner and care must be taken to keep from tearing it, but it will do the job.

Recycle some of those good shopping bags that you bring home. We had nice CES bags at the fair that were made of brown craft paper. With a spruce branch and cones strategically placed over the printed logo, it worked great for holding a gift. For smaller presents, buy 40 white lunch bags for \$3.29 or brown ones at 100 for \$3.49. That many bags will last you for several years.

Use your imagination this year and you can save a few dollars to be used somewhere else in your budget.