



Extension News Column

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Although some people enjoy wrapping Christmas presents, some of us would rather fight the crowds at the store than to mess with it. And that pricy paper can make a dent in your holiday budget. Did you know that half of the paper consumed in the US every year is used to wrap and decorate consumer products.

If you are pressed for time (or money), you may wonder why wrapping is necessary, but there are a few reasons to bother. Attractive gift wrap makes even a small present seem special. If the present is small, a thoughtfully wrapped gift tells the recipient you care. If you are displaying your gifts under the tree, gift wrap adds to the overall effect of your holiday décor. Even if the paper is thrown away, it will show up in all those Christmas pictures. But there are ways to save each year on the gift wrapping.

I save gift boxes and bags from year to year. They are used, broken down and put up with the Christmas decorations each year.

Use unexpected papers rather than just wrapping paper. Wrap in a map, foil, cellophane, shopping bags, newspaper or even the Sunday comics. I have often used brown craft paper to wrap all my presents with a bright ribbon and some natural finds (pinecones, or acorns) and I have a great present.

Did you know that you can take a photocopy of that outrageous Christmas sweater or even a beautiful Christmas fabric? That paper would make a great package under the tree. Use fabrics (either new or recycled) and bandanas to wrap that gift or even leftover wall paper.

Consider using something besides the traditional ribbon. Wire, string, sashes, yarn, jump ropes, cords, dog leashes, brightly colored rubber bands, tinsel garland, old ties, and garden tape all make great ways to tie up a package. Old silk flowers can be taken apart and taped to the box as a bow.

If that paper or ribbon is wrinkled or creased, it can be ironed with a cool iron. It will look as good as new.

While most people use a bow for the wrap, many other choices are available. Use pinecones, a small Christmas ornament, jingle bells, candy canes, mints, or even a paper snowflake.

Use unusual containers. An oatmeal box, a paper towel roll, mailing tubes, or coffee cans make great holders for those holiday presents.

I love to recycle bags. I use brown paper bags (lunch bags) or white ones to wrap presents. You can glue leaves, flowers, or stickers to the bag, draw pictures on it or color them. Use your creativity. I've even reused those wonderful shopping bags you get from stores. Cover the logo with a piece of Christmas paper or a recycled card front mounted on a piece of construction paper.

The tags can be made from a recycled holiday card mounted on card stock, or just draw the recipients initial on a card and cut it out. You can draw or print your own designs on cardstock

Or gift tags can be printed from

<http://collectibles.about.com/od/holidaycollectin1/ig/Christmas-Gift-Tags> or

<http://familycrafts.about.com/cs/christmasprints/a/121100a.htm>