

Make Your Own Wrapping Paper

As adorable as those rows of pretty wrapping paper marching down the store aisles are, one look at the price tag is likely to turn even the most die-hard holiday fanatic into the Grinch. Refusing to buy pricey paper doesn't mean that you can't have pretty presents, though. Encourage your child to look for snazzy—albeit unconventional—wrapping materials around your home, and this year's presents will look gorgeous without you shelling out a dime! Your child will learn the importance of recycling as he receives a lesson in present-wrapping basics.



What You Need:

- Newspaper
- Old calendar pages
- Old pillowcases
- Coffee cans
- Decorated paper
- Maps
- Waxed paper art

What You Do:

Newspaper:

- This one's a classic, but for good reason! The crisp black and white paper looks top-notch when wrapped around a box and tied with pretty colored ribbon. Have your little one search for his favorite pages to use, and suggest that he turns to the inside pages or the classifieds if he likes the appearance of words over pictures.

Old Calendar Pages:

- Out with the old; in with the new! Instead of just tossing away your old agenda or calendar pages, invite your child to use them to make creative wrapping paper. Small gifts can be wrapped using just one calendar page, or he can layer and tape calendar pages together to wrap larger presents.

Old Pillowcases:

- Pillowcases are a particularly pretty way to wrap up presents. Recipients will be impressed that your child has covered his presents with cloth, but there's very little effort involved. Show your child how to use the pillowcases as he would paper (fold and tape them into place), or simply put his gift inside the case and tie it up with a pretty bow!

Coffee Cans:

- If your family drinks a lot of coffee, this one is a no-brainer! Those shiny silver cylinders are perfect for gifts on the smaller side—just clean them out, have your child slip his gift inside, and pop on the lid. Finish it off with a festive ribbon and wait for the family's "oohs" and "ahhs"!

Decorated Paper:

- Big rolls of brown paper are great for various art projects and are generally inexpensive. If you have one lying around, invite your child to have at it! He will gain valuable wrapping practice with this easy-to-work-with paper, an activity that is very beneficial for his motor skill development. Gifts

look great wrapped in the neutral paper alone, but sponging or stenciling on bright paint will really liven them up!

Maps:

- When you cross a state line or visit a national landmark, free maps are often provided at the visitor's center. Start hoarding these, as they make interesting (and informative!) wrapping paper. Have your child wrap up a gift for someone who loves to travel, and his present will be a double-whammy!

Waxed Paper Art:

- This one requires slightly more effort, but it's worth it in the end! Ask your child to collect an assortment of flower petals and leaves; a greater variety makes for more interesting packaging. Pull out the ironing board, spread a plain cloth on top of it, and place a sheet of waxed paper on top of that. Invite him to scatter the petals and leaves until he's happy with the way they look. Put the second sheet of waxed paper over the arrangement, and help him carefully press the iron across the paper. The heat of the iron glues the sheets of waxed paper together, creating adorable floral wrapping paper!