

## 5 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT...

... gift wrapping when you haven't any wrapping paper  
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It's getting close to the witching hour. Are all your presents wrapped? And more fundamentally, do you have (enough) wrapping paper?

For those who find themselves in a paper-and-ribbon shortage and are unable/unwilling to get back out there to buy more, we have some solutions. We asked five design people from the Chicago area to come up with one quick, but nonetheless wildly creative idea for a non-traditional wrap job -- on the fly. Here's what they came up with:

1. Grandma will love it. If you have children, you have an excess of artwork, no doubt. Tape a few of the kids' masterpieces together, says Beth Barnett, owner of Larkspur, a floral shop in Chicago's Bucktown neighborhood. Or, "put the kids on the floor" with a roll of kraft paper and some crayons/markers and let them go to town.

**2. Be scrappy. Turn scrap strips from the ends of various rolls into something big -- both in size and visual appeal, says Chicago graphic designer Cary Zartman (of Z Factory, his own firm). "Take a single sheet of tissue paper -- or even a spread of newsprint -- and coat it lightly with spray adhesive," says Zartman in an e-mail to us. "Then take the myriad strips of castoff paper and position them [on that sheet of paper] to create a new hybrid design. Cut them into many thin strips or even a patchwork quilt of pattern." Monochromatic combinations look the most impressive. Alternating two or three papers will give you a "dynamic enough contrast that you can skip the bow," Zartman says. And if you don't have spray adhesive on hand, just tape the strips together on the backside.**

3. Junk food to the rescue. Chicago designer Julie DiOrio raided her cupboards to come up with a funky metallic wrapping "paper" -- made out of a potato chip bag. (Or any bag with a foil inside.) Simply turn the emptied bag inside out and cut it open so you are left with a sheet of metallic paper, DiOrio says. Wash the metallic side under the faucet and wipe dry. And then wrap away. Being ambitious, DiOrio took a strip of the bag and tied it around her box and attached other smaller strips to the larger strip and then curled the loose strips with sharp scissors to make a bow -- with shards of writing on it. "I love the idea that when" the gift is opened, the wrapping paper's true identity is revealed, DiOrio says.

4. Grocery bag to the rescue. Create your own artsy, mottled paper by taking an ordinary brown paper (grocery store) bag and having some fun with it, says Chicago author Stacey Ballis, whose other gig is making regular appearances on the "Rachael Ray Show" on WBBM-Ch. 2, where Ballis offers lifestyle and entertaining tips. Cut off any handles (if the bag has them) and cut open the bottom of the bag so you have a flat sheet. Now crumple the bag (giving you a textural effect) and then lay it flat again. Using a rag or paper towel and watered-down liquid food color or paint or even liquid tea, apply a wash of color over the bag "so you get a hint of color" and it looks "marble-y," Ballis says. Don't soak the bag. You're going for a light color wash. And of course, you're applying the wash to the side of the bag without any store logos or lettering. Let the bag dry for around 15 minutes, using a hair dryer to speed up the process. Then wrap.

5. All tied up. Find a scarf or handkerchief in the house that looks pretty, but one you can part with, says Chicago bookbinder Bari Zaki. Place your box in the center of the flat cloth turning the box askew as it sits on the material. Pull one corner over the box (draping it atop the box), then the opposite corner over the box as well. Now take the opposite ends that remain loose and tie them over the box. "In Japan, it's called furoshiki," a traditional wrapping cloth used for all kinds of gift giving, Zaki says.

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