

How to make a wreath

There is no prettier Christmas sight than a wreath hanging from your own front door. What better way to let Santa know “Yes, this house does accept gifts” than with a wreath you have made yourself. In fact, my elves tell me that the houses with the most beautiful wreaths receive the biggest piles of presents when Christmas morning finally rolls around. And if that isn’t enough incentive, I don’t know what is.

Follow these five simple steps to make a wreath that Santa can’t miss. Welcome to Wreath-making 101. Let’s get crackin’.

Step 1: Prépare

Collect your materials. You will need:

- Stiff cardboard
- String and scissors
- Glue
- Foliage, such as pine, holly, or gum leaves
- Decorations, such as baubles, dried orange slices, cinnamon sticks, and flowers
- Ribbon

Step 2: Make a base

Cut a large cardboard circle, then carefully cut out a smaller circle inside it. This will give you a cardboard ring that will be the base for your wreath. If the cardboard isn’t very strong, tie or glue two rings together.



Step 3: Sécuré

Cut a piece of string, approximately 4 in (10 cm) long. Choose a piece of foliage and decide where you want to position it on your wreath. Holding the foliage in place, flip the ring over. Attach the foliage to the ring with the string. Continue adding foliage, working your way around until the ring is fully covered on one side.



Step 4: Flip

Flip the ring over so that the foliage is facing you and start thinking about where you will place your decorations. Take a moment to admire your festive handywork.



Step 5: Decorate

Liven up your wreath with decorations. Use whatever you have, in any color you like – anything goes! Secure the decorations with string or glue.



Step 6: Admire

Tie a ribbon around the top of the wreath, leaving enough length to secure it to a hook. Take a step back and admire your creation. Hang it on your front door, over your fireplace or anywhere you need a bit of festive finery.

Now that you know how to make a wreath, why not make them for your friends – they are a wonderful gift!



Christmas centerpiece

Have you ever looked at a festive centerpiece at a restaurant or a florist and thought, “By Jove! That takes my breath away!” No? Just me? I can’t improve your taste, but I can help you create your very own festive centerpiece that will astonish and delight your guests.

What you’ll need

- floral foam ring
- flat plate or round stand
- tall candles
- foliage and florals of your choice (such as pine, holly, gum leaves)
- pruning shears or garden scissors
- pinecones, ribbons or other decorations

Step 1: Secure your candles

Place your floral foam ring on the plate and sit the candles inside it. Arrange the candles as you’d like, then remove the ring without moving the candles. Light a separate candle. Carefully pick up one of your unlit candles and use the flame of the lit candle to melt its base a little. Put it back down in its original spot. Repeat for all the candles. Make sure the candles are tall enough that there will be ample space between the top of the foliage and the flame, to avoid any flare-ups (see **Note**).

Step 2: Prepare the floral foam ring

Put the foam ring into a large bowl of water. Allow the ring to soak up the water (don’t rush this process – it will take about 90 seconds). Remove the ring when it is fully soaked and put it back over the candles.

Step 3: Add your foliage

Using pruning shears, trim your foliage into a variety of lengths to give your centerpiece depth. Working in a circular motion, stick the foliage into the foam ring. I recommend working mostly with bushier foliage, like pine, to start. When your foam resembles a small pine bush, begin adding the secondary florals. Make sure that none of the foliage is anywhere near the top of the candles, where the flame will be.

Step 4: Finishing touches

Arrange and attach any other decorations. You could even dust it off with a sprinkle of glitter.

Note: Never leave a lit candle unattended.



Advent calendar

No offence to chocolate, but haven't chocolate advent calendars been done? Imagine an advent calendar that holds new and exciting treats every day, like ornaments for the tree, little bottles of gin or even seeds for the garden. Follow the instructions below to tailor your advent calendar to the eccentricities and little pleasures of your loved ones.

What you'll need

- 24 small paper bags
- holiday-themed decorations
- markers, stickers or washi tape
- note paper and pen (optional)
- small treats (such as candy, chocolate, nuts)
- small gifts (such as mini toys, cute hair clips, key rings)
- string and scissors
- wall hooks or nails
- 24 mini clothespins
- glue (or a hot glue gun)

Step 1: Decorate the bags

Number each bag from 1 to 24 and decorate with festive designs, such as snowflakes or Christmas trees. Use the markers, stickers or washi tape to personalize each bag. You could even glue on some rosemary or pine sprigs.

Step 2: Fill the bags

Fill each bag with notes, small treats or tiny gifts. Seal the bags securely to keep the contents hidden.

Step 3: Hang the calendar

Cut a piece of string long enough to hold all 24 bags. Hang it across a wall or mantle and tie the ends to your wall hooks or nails. Use clothespins to attach the bags to the string, leaving some space between each bag. If you have room, you can add extra decorations between some of the bags.

Step 4: Enjoy!

Have fun opening one bag every day in the lead-up to Christmas!



SNOW BE IT!

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THOMAS LINKINS