

How to wrap it up with style

Good wrapping job puts finishing touch on that perfect gift

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"Done!" announces my husband as we leave the shop with the last item ticked off our Christmas list. "Now we can go home, kick up our feet, relax."

His voice trails off as I aim a fishy eyeball at him. Is he kidding? Does he not realize that we can now look forward to at least one, if not several, evenings of wrapping and measuring and rushing out for more double-sided tape?

You can carefully choose the most exquisite and expensive gift, but if you simply fling a few sheets of gift-wrap over it and slap some tape on the ends, the whole effect says, "Can't be bothered."

It takes a bit of effort to wrap a present well, says Katie Porcina, manager of the west end's Classic Packaging Store. It doesn't matter whether you're wrapping in unbleached newsprint or in the finest velvets and organza, there are a few tricks of the trade to make wrapping easier.

"Everybody has such different, unique tastes," Porcina says. "I don't think any way is a bad way when it's your own creative touch on the package."

Consider the shape and size of the gift when you're packing, she suggests. Tiny presents, for instance, can be tucked inside a small toilet paper roll, wrapped in bright foil bunched at both ends and sealed with holiday stickers, to resemble a Christmas cracker. If you want to get really creative, Porcina suggests picking up some cracker snaps at Lewis-craft to make a real cracker.

"Or we've taken a jewelry box, emptied it and covered it so it is a two-piece gift box, and tied it shut with gold ribbon or some-



PHOTOS BY CANDACE ELLIOTT, THE JOURNAL

Katie Porcina demonstrates wrapping technique.

thing that matches the paper."

What about those really big presents, such as skis and furniture? When one of her customers brought in an office chair on wheels, she smothered the chair in tissue paper to disguise it, then slipped it into a huge cellophane bag and tied the whole thing with a bow.

Those cellophane bags, available at her store, also come in handy when you're trying to

wrap a gift basket. There are special rules when it comes to packaging those, says Porcina. First you have to construct it.

"When you're building a gift basket, crumple up tissue paper or even newspaper into lots of balls and fill your basket with that first. The newspaper creates stability in your basket and all of your products won't sink down." Only then do you add your shredded, coloured paper.

SANTA TIPS

Three tips for those Santa presents:

► At a certain age, youngsters begin to put two and two together, or at least the type of wrapping paper used on the gift from Mummy and Daddy and the one from the Jolly Elf.

► If you're hoping to keep the magic going, remember that Santa uses his own wrapping paper that probably doesn't match yours. Nor would he use the fancy bow that was on young Sarah's birthday present two months ago.

► Finally, Santa has his own handwriting style. I'm told he does so much writing and making of lists that he often uses his left hand.

The aim of a good gift basket is to create different levels, she says, which adds to the visual appeal. For instance, you might put your crackers in first, then add jams and finally the cheeses.

And because you're working on visual appeal, you don't want to hide it under solid wrapping paper. Most people choose embellished cellophane. If you're not going to use a cellophane bag, Porcina recommends taping two of the sides of your sheet UNDERNEATH your basket, so you're not dealing with too much bulk at the top. Tie with curly ribbon or a large bow.

Other awkwardly shaped items, such as teddy bears, can be placed in boxes or nestled inside a gift bag. But there are rules here too.

"People have a tendency to take their product and put it on top of the tissue, says Porcina. "Instead, put it on the bottom and finish with a nice full lush puff, and it won't look as if your bag has been smushed. Take a nice curly ribbon and tie it to the handle; you can use it to slip through the hole in your gift bag."

Still feeling all thumbs? The staff at Classic Packaging is happy to help