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It is almost impossible to be immune to the excitement of another Christmas approaching in the calendar. The childish reverence and joy need not be limited to a quick look every morning, however. Advent calendars make a ceremony to anticipate the big day, and for more than a century, they've added drama and maybe a few surprises to the weeks before Christmas [source: Holidays.net]. There is some controversy about how the practice of Advent may have begun, but there is no doubt that it can be great fun to add a functional decoration to the festivities that serves as a calendar counting down the days to Christmas. Although traditional Advent calendars officially began the countdown on the fourth Sunday before Christmas and often had simple markers that were moved from one day to the next, many newer calendars begin the festivities on December 1, and often incorporate containers to keep sweets and other goodies. The first step in creating an advent calendar is to define the scope of the project. From simple grids containing 25 squares, to carefully decorated schemes, like those that use painted Christmas trees with hooks or tabs to hold sweets and pictures, you can let your budget and creative interests guide you. For a quick and easy approach, you can even have your kids make an annual Advent calendar of construction paper and place hook-and-loop dots on images to attach to each of the 24 days before Christmas. But you plan to continue, you need some common elements: Design a Backing – Even if you can only tape building paper to the refrigerator, if you want an advent calendar that can withstand a little wear, you need to give it a robust backing. Some popular choices are: framed canvas, cardboard, corkboard, tin cookie sheet, lightweight plywood and quilted fabric. Make a grid - To mark the individual days until Christmas, make daily placeholders on the surface. If small children are involved, using a grid, as a standard calendar, may be the most practical arrangement, but other creative methods also work. From drawing a Santa face and placing the net in the beard, to incorporating days into a sleigh scene with each number peeking out of Santa's bag, almost anything will do as long as it's easy to determine how the system works. Create Markers – Now that you have a foundation and a plan, you need a marker for your countdown. You can create a simple marker by pulling up a small object, like a cardboard snowman, from a ribbon length. Every day, place the snowman in a different position online. You can hold him in place with hook-and-loop dots, or place a small envelope on each day as the snowman marker can fit in. If you want to add some real excitement and drama, add goodies, like cookies or sweets, to the envelopes. As each day passes, your child receives a treatment, and the cursor takes the Envelopes. There are a few other methods you can use here as well. You can place pictures or other interesting, flat objects for each day behind doors made of craft paper. When the doors open, they reveal the surprise. You can also fill envelopes with clues that reveal the location of cheap gifts. The options are quite open, and with the wide availability of scrapbooking and stamping products, you can find almost any motive you have in mind. There's one thing you should consider before you start your project, though. Using an advent calendar can grow into a family tradition and yours can become much more important than you had planned, so build it out of robust materials to withstand years of Christmas fun. Related HowStuffWorks articles Sources Antonioti, Kathy. The Christmas calendar begins christmas countdown. News Wire. 11/22/08. 10/28/09. . Christmas calendar Christmas tree. Undated. 10/25/09. Holly. Advent begins November 30. Info Please. Undated. 10/26/09. Di. Layout - Advent Calendar. Undated. 10/26/09. . History of the Advent calendar. Beate. Homemade Christmas advent calendar. Split Coast Stampers. Undated. 10/19/09. . Santa Advent Calendar Craft. Undated. 10/22/09. Langlois. Picture Perfect advent calendar. Home Envy. Undated. 10/21/09. World Christmas. The history of the Advent calendar. Undated. 10/29/09. All of our Race for Life shop items are currently moving to a new home, so will be offline for a little while. Everything will be back online in January 2021. Even if you can't shop to support right now, you can still sign up for Race for Life 2021. You can still claim a free Race for Life 2020 medal here. Add your own treats behind each door in this reusable Nutcracker character advent calendar, and count down the days leading up to Christmas. Features: 17.5 x 44 x 7cm Fake fur fuzzy hair detail It's easy to make your own advent calendar from household items, and in most cases, it's either free or extremely cost effective. It depends on how creative you want to get, but for starters, collecting useful materials like cardboard boxes, extra strips of wood, scrap paper, and pieces of fabric – this is great way to reduce waste by upcycling and repurposing. And do not forget the essentials of a pencil, paint (acrylic is a good all-rounder), plus glue and tape. Your DIY advent calendar can be as good as a store bought one, in fact it will hold a special meaning because it is handmade. Find out how to make an advent calendar with these simple ideas using items from across your home. 1. Homemade advent calendar with a conscious twistWe love this conscious adult advent calendar idea from craft blogger Jayanthi at Maiden Aunt. All you need is a corkboard, a few pins, mini envelopes and a paper and pencil. Write a list of 25 things that make you smile every day in December on separate pieces of paper and put them in each envelope – it's a lovely countdown to Christmas Day. Jayanthi Ezekiel You can also follow the same idea here but place them in a box instead of hanging or pegging to a board, or pop them into a large jar. This content is imported from Pinterest. You may be able to find the same content in a different format, or you can find more information on their website. Print your favorite photos or most valuable photos (try Bonusprint, Snapfish, or Photobox for online services) in a Polaroid-style retro format. The images you select can be theme or part of an event, but as long as they all mean something to you that is the most important thing. Once you have printed, turn each photo on the back and number each one, then attach these to either cardboard or thick paper (aim for A2 or A1 size). When you turn on a photo every day you will end up with a lovely photo collage capturing special memories, perfect for this time of year. This content is imported from Pinterest. You may be able to find the same content in a different format, or you can find more information on their website. Did you get an unused wall rack? Build excitement with an advent calendar of treat-filled red and white paper bags. Accessorise with ribbons and mini decorations. Dan Duchars 4. Wooden Advent Calendar One of the simplest, but most effective wooden advent calendars I've seen was a series of wooden slats cut to different sizes and stuck together to make a Christmas tree shape, says DIY expert Jo Behari. You can use an old stool or apple box to create your own. Cut the ends at an angle so that they have a nice slope for the tree shape: you can use a mitreblock or just make a pencil mark to cut along a square. Either screw them together on the back using flat mounts, or fix them to a long strip of wood. Once you have your tree shape, hammer in small nails to hang your advent treats on. A star on top will add a Christmas touch. SE7ENTYN9NE.COM If this sounds a bit difficult, a really simple wooden advent calendar would be a strip of MDF painted in Christmas colors, Jo suggests. You can even add your last name to it and then hang 24 (or 25 if you count Christmas Day) wooden sticks on it. Every year you can customize your goodies either by hanging them or in small parcels attached to the pegs.'5. Part purchase, part do Works about do not have any extra wooden boxes located around the house, you can buy, for example, a wooden advent box, and then decorate it yourself with découpage paper or acrylic paint. The Works sells a wooden house advent calendar for £20, while Baker Ross sells one for £16.95. This 25-box cabinet from The Works (£15) is a great option, and you can also buy similar versions on Amazon.6. Cardboard tubeDIY advent calendarAll you have to do is save up 12 cardboard tubes from kitchen rolls and use leftover wrapping paper, plus some numbered stickers. Cut the tubes in half and fill the holes with your favorite godos or mini chocolate bars. Follow this video tutorial on Pinterest (below). This content is imported from Pinterest. You may be able to find the same content in a different format, or you can find more information on their website. Keep it really simple and fuss-free using wooden sticks, which you can paint in festive colors, to hang envelopes or small bags (like burlap bags) that contain small gifts. String with jute yarn. egalGetty Images 8. Christmas bag advent calendarWe love this idea. Just use your old current bag from last year, or you can buy a new Christmas bag, and fill with small pillow boxes (buy from Amazon) that you can number for every day in December until Christmas Day. Fill the pillow boxes with whatever you want, whether it's chocolate, trinkets, tree decorations or mini alcohol bottles. This content is imported from Pinterest. 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