Christmas gifts to make

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Most of us appreciate a small, thoughtful gift much more than a “bought in a hurry” gift. Here are a few suggestions for simple gifts that can be made, giving pleasure to both the maker and the recipient. They are also useful for stocking stalls for fetes.

**Kitchen Ideas**

Practical things glamorised or made interesting are always acceptable gifts or good selling lines. Such things as aprons, pot holders and oven cloths are easily made in great variety. For added interest, make pot holders in a simple cat, tea-pot, hat, mitten, “crocodile’s head” or other fancy shape. Attach a pot holder and small hand towel to an apron. Make a pair of holders and give two sets of removable covers made from bright, sturdy material.

Sets of basin covers (like shower caps) also sell well. Cut circles of plastic fabric approximately 6 in., 8 in. and 10 in. in diameter and machine stitch the elastic using a large stitch ¼ in. in from the edge, stretching as you sew.

Drink coasters can be cut from thin foam plastic sheeting, using several colours and cutting with pinking shears. Parcel attractively in cellophane.

Milk jug covers can be quickly made by placing two square or triangular pieces of net together (edges hemmed first) so that the centres are double but points single; an eight or six pointed star results. Trim
edges with feather stitch or crochet, and attach a bead to each point. Small square lace doyleys can be bought quite cheaply and made into pretty milk jug covers with a crochet edge and beads. (Choose a lace with a closely woven design.)

Children can use hessian to make pot holders, peg aprons and so on by closely working lazy daisy flowers or darning with wool as taught at school. One and a half cardboard plates can be sewn together to form a memo-holder, and trimmed with cut out pictures from magazines. Little girls may like to make dolls' flowerpots by arranging miniature everlasting flowers in plasticine or melted wax in small flower-pot shaped toothpaste tops. If the artificial flowers become faded or limp they can be restored with nail varnish.

**Tissue Tidy**

This simple gift would grace any beauty box or dressing table. Cut out two heart shapes with pinking shears in a dainty patterned plastic. Sew together ½ in. from the edges, inserting a loop for hanging at the centre top. Make a circle or a lengthwise slit in the centre of the upper piece, and fill with tissues or cotton balls (or give a pair, one of each). These could be made in material and lined with plastic, and trimmed with crochet, lace or embroidery if desired. To obtain a good heart shape, fold a piece of paper in half and draw one side. Cut double and open out to check shape. Re-cut if necessary until an attractive shape is the result. Other shapes can be used, and an attractive circular tidy can be made using two plastic doyleys put together with ribbon.

**Coat Hangers.**

Wooden coat hangers can be padded with cotton wool or wadding, covered with remnants of pretty material, and trimmed with ribbon bow, small artificial flowers, lavender sachet, moth ball holders, etc.

Another idea is to pad lightly and cover, then trim and provide extra padding by sewing rosettes of material along each edge. To make a rosette, join a 6 in. by 2 in. strip of material so that it forms a short cylinder. Press raw edges ¼ in. inwards, run a gathering thread through each fold, draw up thread and flatten circle. End threads securely.

Sew a strip of rosettes along each side of the hanger, attaching with oversew stitches across top and lower edges, and at each end of hanger. Paint or cover hook and trim with ribbon bow. Plain fabrics are best for this type; for extra effect a bead or sequin can be sewn in the centre of each rosette.

Foam plastic sheeting and plastic cord can also be used to cover coathangers. This is a simple job for children to do. Cut a 3½ in. strip, the length of the hanger plus two inches, pierce in the middle for hook, and place over the wood. Hold in
place with pins and secure with plastic cord threaded on a bodkin. Do simple running stitch or cross stitch starting and ending in the middle. Tie cord in a double bow to form trim. The plastic foam fabric can be cut with pinking shears, or scallops can be cut these are marked out by drawing around coins for even spacing and curves. A plain covered hanger could be trimmed with a scalloped foam plastic strip. Put the join at the top of the hanger and hide it with a half-inch strip, sewn tightly with oversews at half-inch intervals to form a soft double scallop.

Inch wide strips of foam plastic, cut with pinking shears, can also be used bandage-wise to cover coat hangers. Start at each end and join in the centre by twisting around the hanger firmly, overlapping the end and hiding the cut edges each time. Finish at the hook, cut and stitch to hold in place, and trim as before. A soft, thickly padded hanger is the result. Foam plastic covered hangers have an advantage over the taffeta-covered hangers in that frocks of the most slippery fabrics do not slide off them.

**Clothes Brush**

A very pretty and practical clothes brush can be made, again using a coat hanger and foam plastic. Being longer than the usual type of clothes brush, and curved, it is a very effective, easy-to-use dust and fluff remover.

Remove the hook from the coathanger after screwing it through to make a hole through the centre. Cover one end of the hanger with a two inch circle of foam plastic, then wrap plastic cord tightly around it, binding the end down on the underside, until the centre hole is reached. End by passing the cord through the hole and tying. Cut a sheet of foam plastic into a length two inches wider than half the hanger. Wrap this around the bare end of the hanger until the sheet is used and the end comes to the top. Using plastic cord, tie tightly round the foam at the centre of the hanger and just past the end so that there is a one inch frill of foam plastic formed at each edge. Trim along the join with a few small artificial flowers or ribbon bow, or foam plastic flowers can be made by cutting sixpence-sized circles, stitching a tuck in the edge of each and putting five together on a circle.

**Dressing Table Tidy**

For this an empty fruit or milk tin is required. Remove lid right to the rim, and see that there are no sharp edges on the inside. The tin is then covered with contact plastic baize and trimmed with bobble braid. Paint the inside of the tin and the top and lower rims, and glue a circle of felt on the base of the tin if desired. Cut the contact baize the depth of the tin between the rims and the circumference plus one inch in length. Peel the backing from the baize a little at a time and roll the baize around the tin, smoothing air bubbles from centre outwards. Baize must be cut absolutely straight and fit just to the rim. Glue the bobble braid around the upper rim, starch firmly, and sew across ends. If desired, the inside of the tin could be lined with the baize too, and a lift-up lid could be attached. For the lid, cut a circle of stiff straw board the same size as the tin, and cover both sides with the plastic baize. Paint the edge or glue a narrow braid or cord around it. Attach lid to the tin with a 1 in. strip of baize before gluing the bobble braid in place. For a more feminine effect, place a piece of cottonwool or wadding on the inside of the lid and

Contact baize and trimmings can transform an empty tin into an attractive dressing table tidy.

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cover with a circle of satin or taffeta 2 in. bigger than the lid. If liked, quilt this by sewing through the strawboard and threading a small crystal bead on the needle on the inside before pulling through to the top. Catch stitch the raw edges on the top and cover with a circle of baize or material. Sew a plait of narrow ribbon or a narrow lace edging around the edge, joining at the hinge.

These ideas can also be used for making glove or trinket boxes, or sewing tidy. Any shaped cardboard box or tin can be used. A waste paper container can be made in the same way. The plastic contact baize fabric can transform empty press-in lid tins into attractive canisters. Sheep dip tins make good sized flour or sugar bins.

**Sewing Companion**

For a person about to travel, or a keen needlewoman, this is one of the handiest gifts possible. It is in the form of a small book which opens out to reveal needles, pins and other sewing implements. Small pieces of lace ribbon, hat elastic, cotton wadding, strawboard, and remnants of flannel and covering fabric are required. Cut two pieces of strawboard 5 in. by 4 in., and glue on to a 5 in. strip of material so that the 5 in. sides are $\frac{1}{2}$ in. apart, forming a book-like cover with a soft hinge. Round off the four outside corners. Make a pin booklet from two pieces of flannel 6 in. by 4 in., cut with pinking shears. Place a layer of wadding over the strawboard, then the lining material (9 in. by 6 in.) across which has been put a strip of ribbon sewn at $\frac{1}{4}$ in. and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. intervals. (These slots will have bodkin, needle threader, small scissors, tape measure and so on through them when the sewing companion is completed). Place the flannel pin booklet centrally and sew all together through the soft hinge. Put a layer of wadding then the outside covering on the outside turn in edges and topsew to the lining. Hide stitching around edges and down centre fold with lace or braid. Sew on a press stud to keep closed when not in use.

If desired, a thimble basket can be crocheted, starting with a ring of four chain. Do simple chain and treble in a spiral, increasing often for the first four rows then working nearly straight till thimble shaped. When a little longer than the thimble join a $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. length of hat elastic into a circle and crochet over this for the last row (so the thimble cannot be lost). End with 3 in. of chain and join across to other side to make basket handle. Sew the centre of the basket handle to the centre lower edge of the sewing companion. Equip the companion with pins, small safety pins, various sewing and darning needles, and so on. Wind lengths of black, white and coloured cotton threads around a neatly cut card and slip the card inside the folds.

**Stoles and Scarves**

Lightly embroider a half yard of 72 in. nylon tulle with rayon and tinsel threads to make an evening stole, or a quarter yard of 36 in. net or tulle for a scarf. Sequins and beads give added glamour; scatter a few small sprays at centre and ends. For a warm scarf or stole for winter, darn with wool through the holes of the net, making the under stitch small but varying the length of the over stitches to make patterns. Mohair and tinsel thread could make a very attractive winter evening scarf or stole. A plain pair of fabric gloves could be embroidered to match—fancywork down the side seam and little finger is unusual and effective.

**Wrapping**

When time and effort has been put into making an article, it is worth a little extra time and effort to wrap it attractively. Gift articles, cellophane wrapped, sell quicker than unwrapped lines; and no one could prefer undoing a brown paper bag to the much more interesting unwrapping of a pretty, rustling, ribbon-tied package.
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