

Counting Down With a Hand-Crafted Advent Calendar

While I understand even as an adult that the holidays are all about family and friends, I can't help but reminisce about one of my favourite parts of the holidays, which was the Advent Calendar countdown to Christmas. Let's face it, who wouldn't enjoy counting down the days to Christmas with a piece of chocolate every day!

Well, given my love of crafts, and the environment, I thought it would be a great idea to help two of my favourite munchkins create their very own, reusable, advent calendar. My girlfriend's kids have been a large part of my life, and I enjoy spending lots of time with them, so whenever we plan a sleepover, we also plan for a fun craft. This one was incredibly easy, and can be used for years to come. My only regret is that I didn't make one for myself!

Tools You'll Need:

Painting Canvas (minimum size 16" x 12")

Christmas Fabric (optional)

Staple Gun (only necessary if using fabric)

Glue Gun—be sure that an adult does this part

25 Small bead containers or small boxes

25 Foil Squares—cut into squares approximately 2"x2"(necessary only if containers don't have lids)

25 Candies/Chocolates—be sure they fit into whatever containers you have chosen

Scissors

Construction Paper

Scotch Tape

Permanent Marker

Christmas craft accessories—eg: scrap-booking decals, garland, beads, confetti, etc

Cut the fabric to approximately 1" larger than the canvas on all sides. Stretch over the canvas, and use the staple gun to tack to the back of the canvas. If you don't want to use fabric, set out some paints for the kids to decorate the canvas with. Then let the kids use the accessories to decorate however they see fit! I found it best to have them lay everything out on the canvas how they wanted it, and I simply went over it all with the glue gun when they were done. This allows them to make any changes they want to along the way.

For the containers, I had found these plastic bead containers at the dollar store, but they didn't come with lids. So, we went to the bulk food store to find the candies, and while I was there I picked up some pre-cut 4"x4" foils in silver and gold (sometimes they will have other colours available as well). I then cut these into quarters, had the kids write the numbers 1-25 on them with a permanent marker, and we attached them over our containers by simply wrapping the edges in clear scotch tape (after putting the candy/chocolate inside of course). Each day in

December, they simply poke through the foil to get their treat. I also cut strips of festive coloured construction paper 4" x 1/2", and these were placed inside the containers to wrap around the inside edge to keep from being able to peek at the treats. Wondering why the one on the left has fewer containers? She didn't want to take away from the decorations, so she put 2 treats in each container, and marked each with 2 days. The best part is that these can be used each year simply by replacing the treats, and the foil. It doesn't get much simpler!

