

We just know you can make this bow

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A premade, self-adhesive bow fished out of a plastic bag just doesn't impress in the age of Martha Stewart. Although most wrappers are guilty of slapping on a stiff, awkward bow in a last-minute frenzy, making a beautiful bow is possible even for the least crafty among us.

Simple bow solutions abound. The easiest one is to tie a bow the way you tie shoelaces, then add a novelty ribbon in contrasting colors, like stripes or polka dots, to make your present pop, said Ann Conway, owner of Swee Swee Paperie & Studio in West Seattle. Other ideas include adding a small ornament for dimension or even making a bow out of newspaper by pleating it accordion-style.

But for a slightly more ambitious project, we enlisted Conway's gift-wrapping expertise. She showed us a bow that is voluminous, textured and pretty, yet also simple to make. Wire ribbon gives the bow structure, and sheer and silky satin ribbons add texture. You can add more ribbons or take some away depending on the size of the gift.

"You can manipulate your ribbons so many ways using this technique," Conway said.

Plan ahead when shopping, picking up ribbon in addition to your wrapping paper. Conway recommends investing in at least one roll of pricier wire ribbon to add some structure.

But be a little forgiving, too. Everyone thinks his or her bows don't look good, she said. Just keep tweaking and practicing, and you'll soon find yourself making ones worthy of Martha.

Here, Conway shows step-by-step how to create a bow.

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Creating a bow

Supplies:

- Ribbon to tie around the box
- Two 1½-yard-long ribbons or three 1-yard-long ribbons for the bow, including at least one wire ribbon
- A twist-tie or wire
- Scissors



1 Tie a piece of ribbon around the package to cover the seam, knotting it on top. You also can do a more traditional criss-cross pattern, tying it together on top.



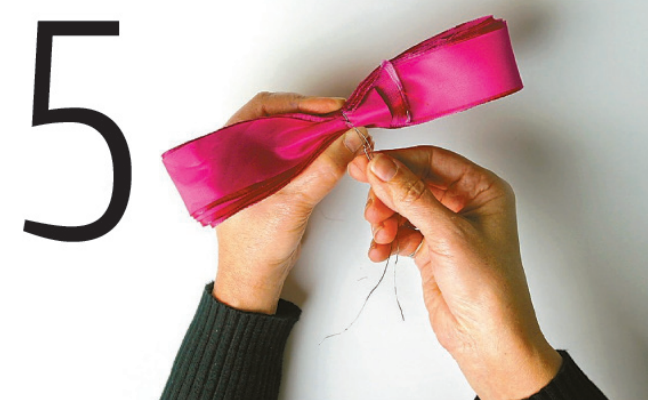
2 Set the ribboned box aside. Cut the two ribbons for the bow into 1½-yard long pieces, then match up the ends and hold them in one hand.



3 Anchor the ribbons in your hand and loop them evenly two to three times until you run out of ribbon, making sure not to tangle them. The loop for this bow measured 8 inches in length.



4 Fold the bow in half to measure the center; cinch the middle with your fingers.



5 Secure the center with flexible wire or a twist-tie.



6 Tie the bow to the box with ribbon.



7 Fluff the bow, pulling out loops one at a time and twisting one forward then one back. Repeat. Tweak until the bow looks right.



8 Voilà!



GET HELP

If all this is too much to handle, you can have Ann Conway wrap gifts for you. She charges \$3 and up for gift wrapping (but if you buy wrapping paper and ribbon, she wraps for free).

Swee Swee Paperie & Studio:
4218 S.W. Alaska St., Seattle;
206-937-7933.

Holiday hours: 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
Saturday and Sunday.

Other shops also offer wrapping services or provide gift boxes. Check with your favorite retailers; there may be a charge or restrictions.

> See the step-by-step slide show at seattletimes.com/homegarden