

# Mum hacks: Party time

Need a birthday pressie and card pronto, but the cupboards are bare? Don't worry, says *Kate Farr*. There is always a solution...

If – like me – you never quite get to the bottom of your kids' school bag, there's a high likelihood that, in addition to mouldering bananas and plaintive notes about PE kit, a party invitation or two lurks. Here are a few crafty hacks to make you look creative and thoughtful (as opposed to slummy and forgetful) the next time you find yourself staring down the barrel of a birthday bash that begins in just over an hour.

## Gift hacks

Finding a short-notice gift can actually be pretty straightforward, depending on the type of party you're invited to. There's the classic re-gifting option, although this is not without its risks unless you've kept an infallible record of exactly who gave your kid the "Super Mega-Noize Blaster Max" last year.

If you're at all unsure, move on to phase two, which I like to optimistically think of as an educational pay-forward, rather than plain old cheapskate. Put simply, you wrap a much-loved book for the birthday boy or girl, and present it as a thoughtful gift. "My little cherub simply adored this slightly chewed copy of *Angelina Ballerina/Thomas The Tank Engine/anything by Julia Donaldson*, so we thought we'd share the joy with you!" (Note: this is always more convincing if your child isn't clinging

to your leg, sobbing "Mummy, please nooo! It's my favourite!"). The birthday child will probably hate you, but their parents will be taking note. (And let's be honest, they're who you're really out to impress here).

Too squeamish for such blatant subterfuge? Then the DIY option is your friend. A batch of freshly-made animal cookies or a sleepover voucher are quick and simple to whip up within a few minutes and look thoughtful - even if they're not.

## Card hacks

Gift sorted, it's time for a card. If you've exhausted your stash of spares and it's too late for a trip to the nearest stationers, something handmade by your little invitee is the

most obvious option. Get them busy with the glitter glue and stickers making something "unique" that passes muster (offer bribes if necessary to get the job done in time).

Failing that, record and share an enthusiastic Happy Birthday video via iCloud for a really personal touch. If you spot any raised eyebrows, cite environmental concerns as your reason for swerving a traditional card. There is literally no arguing with this, leaving you totally off the hook.

## Gift-wrap hacks

Recycle kids' artwork for a colourful finishing touch to your hacked gift. As an added bonus, this also helps to make space for more "memories" to join the rolling gallery adorning every wall in your apartment.

Show off the craft skills you picked up during all that time spent on Pinterest with brown paper and twine giftwrap. (Added hipster points if you bring your own mason jars and paper straws for drinks).

Own your lack of planning with some ironic newspaper wrapping, but do proceed with caution. True story: I used this trick for my son's third birthday pass the parcel but realised halfway along that I'd accidentally wrapped the kids' treats in a sex advice column. Always check your headlines carefully. 📰

