

Making an Advent wreath

Did you know that the Advent wreath, which traditionally adorns today's homes in the Advent season, is not as old as you might think? The first Advent wreath was made by the Hamburg theologian Johann Hinrich Wichern in 1839. Wichern ran the 'Rauhe Haus', a children's home near Hamburg. His wreath, however, did not look the way wreaths do now. Wichern embellished a chandelier with lots of pine branches and put twenty-four candles on it, to count the days until Christmas for the children. 1925 was the year the first Advent wreath was hung up in a church in Cologne. After that, this custom spread all over the world.

Making your own Advent wreath

- 1 You need a straw ring, to wrap twigs around. In the Advent season you can buy these in all sizes in arts and crafts shops or home improvement stores.



- 2** You then need to collect green twigs from firs, spruce, and other evergreen trees. You can use just one type of twig, or a mixture. That's up to you. To bind the twigs, you need florist's wire. You get this in the same shop where you buy the straw ring. Now cut the twigs (with scissors or garden shears) to a length of approximately 10–15 cm. You may need an adult to help you with this.



- 3** Take a couple of twigs and arrange them next to each other on the wreath and wrap their ends round with florist's wire. Don't cut the wire just yet. Now, take the next twigs, and lay them on top of the wreath, with their tips covering the ends of the first ones. Then wrap the wire around these twigs as well. Carry on doing this until the whole wreath is completely wrapped in green twigs, then cut the wire and tuck the sharp end into the straw ring.



- 4 It'll already look pretty good! Now it's time to decorate it. Whatever else you put on it, the Advent wreath must have four candles. The simplest thing is to stick four candle holders into the straw wreath. Now you can decorate it. You can stick on beads, stars, pine cones, dried oranges, cinnamon sticks, ribbons... pretty much any festive decoration you can find.

Important: never light the candles by yourself and never leave a candle burning when you leave the room.