At the beginning of each month, make a date with yourself to write out and mail that month’s greeting cards. Better they arrive early than late or not at all. Keep extra cards in a binder and store your address book nearby.
Gift ideas and greeting cards
Tired of being caught without a card or a clue what to give? Here are two easy fixes. First, get a small notebook, right, and train yourself to write down gift ideas as they pop into your head, plus the hints people drop throughout the year. When a birthday rolls around, you won’t be stumped. Second, rather than shopping for one greeting card at a time, buy several at once and keep them stocked in a binder, below.

Record sizes, favorite colors, and gift ideas in a notebook sized for your purse, top. Or have giftees visit wishpot.com to create a wish list of items from any Web store. The site notifies you if an item goes on sale.

A three-ring notebook fitted with pocket dividers, left, keeps cards organized by occasion. Add a birthday calendar and a pencil case to hold pens and stamps.

Go Online
Download our handy birthday calendar at BHG.com/birthdaycalendar.
Last-minute gifts

Need a little something for a dinner party or a coworker's birthday? Figure out a great all-purpose gift, buy three or four, and keep them wrapped and ready to give on a moment's notice. Try these affordable gifts and easy packaging ideas:

• A box of notecards needs only a simple ribbon bow to look like a gift. Match the ribbon to the notecard design.

• Give a set of travel candles in a mesh bag that shows off their vintage-look tins. Home Care Candle Set, $15; jrwatkins.com

• A cube of traditional French soap is easy on the skin and looks great by the sink. Wrap the cube, then add a band or two of contrasting paper and a sticker for a tag. Olive Oil Soap, $7–$20; frenchsoaps.com

• Everybody can use a nice picture frame in a classic silver or a dark wood finish. Buy boxed frames so they're ready to wrap.
Gift wrap and supplies

To simplify your approach to wrapping, pick a palette and buy only papers in those colors so everything will work together. Two solid-color papers and two patterns are enough to yield lots of different looks. Skip premade bows in favor of a few spools of coordinating ribbon—much more versatile and easier to store.

**SPACE-SAVER**

**Wrap Center**

Think a dedicated gift wrapping space is a large-house luxury? Think again. This sturdy over-door rack is designed to store cans and boxes in a pantry, but it’s perfect for keeping ribbons and papers, too.

1. Keep gift tags in clear, lidded jars so you can see what you have.
2. Line up spools of ribbon on a shelf. Just unroll the length you need and snip.
3. Keep often-used tools like scissors and tape in the middle of the rack so they’re easy to reach. Limit each container to one kind of item so it’s easy to find what you need.
4. Drape tissue paper over the bar of a shelf to keep it unrumpled.
5. Stand up roll wrap in the bottom basket. A heavy-duty rubber band stretched around the rack keeps the rolls upright.
6. File a few gift bags and ready-to-assemble boxes in the bottom basket.