



## Extra-ordinary Uses for Ordinary Items

by Katie O'Sullivan

Every time I go to the store, it seems they've invented a new gadget for some purpose or other. My kitchen drawers are filled with plastic items and doo-dads, each for a single purpose – and my kitchen is just not that big!

Sometimes, it's better to have a few "go-to" items that you know can serve lots of different purposes. As we head into a new decade, I'm trying hard to simplify my life. Let's face it. When you're surrounded by clutter, it's hard to think straight!

So here's my first tip to start the new year: Coffee Filters. Most of us have them – and although making coffee is their number one priority, they work for so many more things!



1. Cover bowls or dishes when cooking in the microwave to keep appliances splatter-free.
2. Filter broken cork from wine: If you break the cork when opening a wine bottle (it happens to the best of us!) filter the wine through a coffee filter into a carafe.
3. Protect a cast-iron skillet. Placing a coffee filter in the skillet will absorb moisture and prevent rust.
4. Recycle frying oil. After frying, strain oil through a colander or kitchen sieve lined with a coffee filter and store in a jar for next time.
5. Weigh chopped foods: Place chopped ingredients in a coffee filter on a kitchen scale.
6. Put a few in a plate and put your fried bacon, French fries, chicken fingers, etc on them to soak out all the grease.
7. Stop the soil from leaking out of a plant pot. Line the pot with a coffee filter before adding soil – the dirt stays in but the water still flow through the drainage holes.
8. Prevent a Popsicle from dripping. (My grandmother used to do this for me way back when, using paper napkins!) Poke one or two holes as needed in a coffee filter and keep little hands cleaner.
9. Clean windows, mirrors, and chrome... Coffee filters are lint-free so they'll leave windows sparkling.
10. Use a filter to remove fingernail polish when out of cotton balls.
11. Apply shoe polish. Ball up a lint-free coffee filter and rub on!
12. Put baking soda into a coffee filter and insert into shoes or a closet to absorb or prevent odors.
13. Use filters to wrap Christmas ornaments for storage.
14. Protect your Holiday china as you pack it away by separating dishes with a coffee filter between each dish.
15. Use a filter as an easy-to-tear backing for embroidering or appliquéing on soft fabrics. It comes off more easily than the more expensive stuff from the fabric store!
16. Use filters to sprout seeds. Simply dampen the coffee filter, place seeds inside, fold it and place it into a plastic baggie until they sprout. This is great for a winter project with kids, too!
17. Speaking of projects, use coffee filters as blotting paper for pressed flowers. Place the flowers between two coffee filters and place inside a heavy book.
18. Another project my kids enjoyed when they were small was to use coffee filters to make colorful butterflies. Watercolor paints spread through the absorbent paper into colorful designs, but Crayola markers work almost as well. Use pipe cleaners twisted in the middle to make the bodies and antenna.
19. Coffee filters can also be used when doing group projects, to give each child in the group their own portion of beads, or glue, or stickers, or foam parts...having separate piles can prevent arguments between little artists.
20. Round coffee filters are also the perfect size to cut into snowflakes to decorate windows!



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