

## Matchbox Countdown

From *The Gift of Calligraphy* by Maybelle Imasa-Stukuls



*The holidays are a time to create family traditions and memories to cherish. In this project, you'll write down special activities in calligraphy and fold them as messages inside miniature matchboxes. Then, every day you open a box and have a fun and festive activity to help celebrate the approaching holiday with family and friends. Creative messages go into each box—for example, leading up to Christmas I would write things like “Let’s go ice skating!” and “Let’s watch our favorite movies together!” Kids love wintry treats and themed projects: “Time to make some hot cocoa!” “Will you make paper snowflakes with me?”*

*Holidays aren't the only time for this matchbox project. Make it for a bride to count down the days leading up to her wedding, writing wishes or encouraging blessings to support her in anticipation of her special day. Or gift it to friends who are expecting a baby, filling each box with a humorous tip or piece of sage parenting advice.*

*Matchboxes are inexpensive, and are easy to find in twelve-packs at the hardware store and without matches at art supply stores. I've made them in a bright color combination for my kids, but feel free to incorporate your favorite palette.*

SKILL LEVEL  
EASY

MATERIALS  
25 empty matchboxes  
Ruler  
Pencil  
Scissors  
6 sheets smooth 8½ by 11-inch paper, assorted colors  
Pointed pen  
Ink, assorted colors  
Double-sided tape  
Glitter and other embellishments

- 1 Using a matchbox as your size guide, measure and cut the colored paper into 25 long strips that will wrap around the outside of the matchbox with a little overlap.
- 2 With pointed pen and ink, using a few different ink colors, write one number—1 to 25—on each paper strip. Place the numbers in or near the center of the area that will be on the matchbox front. Don't worry about perfection here—as long as the numbers are somewhere in the matchbox-front vicinity, they will

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look great. You can orient the numbers in portrait or landscape format, or a variation, and embellish them with stars, lines, swirls, or borders if you'd like. Allow the ink to dry completely.

- 3** Wrap a numbered strip around a matchbox, using your fingers to crease each fold aligned with the edges of the box. Use double-sided tape to adhere the strip to the matchbox. Repeat for the remaining 24 matchboxes.
- 4** Slide out the tray from a matchbox and measure the inside. This is how large each inserted paper message can be when folded up.
- 5** With those measurements as your guide, use a ruler and pencil to make 25 rectangles on colored paper and cut them out. You'll likely want to double or triple the width measurement, so you can write longer messages.
- 6** With pointed pen and ink, write one activity on each piece of paper. Allow the ink to dry completely.
- 7** Fold each message and tuck it inside a matchbox.
- 8** If you wish, fill the boxes with glitter, confetti, sweets, or trinkets.