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## **Getting ready for Halloween at the last minute**

In this crazy, hectic world, we all end up doing some things at the last minute. Sometimes, that can get us in trouble (waiting until the last minute to pay a bill). And sometimes it can be fun and spontaneous (an invite to a last-minute party).

And with today being Halloween, maybe you'll have some fun last-minute things to do. We've devised a guide to help you.

### **JACK O'LANTERN**

Is yours the only bare porch in the neighborhood? Don't worry about intricately carved pumpkin decorations this late in the game. This three-step jack is sure to be a hit with trick-or-treaters.

Supplies:

Large pumpkin

Two small squash or zucchini

Small dowel rod

Carving tool

Knife

Old hat

Battery-operated votive

Marker

1. Using the marker, draw a hexagon on the top of the pumpkin. Force the butcher knife into the pumpkin and follow the line using a slow sawing motion. Remove the top and use the butcher knife to remove part of the rind along with the small bundle of seeds attached to it.

2. Use the spoon to scrape the inside of the pumpkin. This removes the seeds and the filaments that connect to the rind. Also use the spoon again to remove a good portion of the rind from inside of the pumpkin. Break or cut off two small pieces of the dowel rod. Insert through squash into pumpkin. These are the "eyes."

3. Use the marker to draw a circle nose and simple rounded rectangle for the mouth. The simpler, the better. Use the paring knife the slowly cut along the outline of the shapes. Make sure you cut completely into the hollow of the pumpkin. Use the tip of the knife to remove the solid pieces and discard them. Place the battery-operated votive inside the pumpkin and the hat on top of its head.

Adapted from ehow.com.

## DISH TO TAKE TO PARTY

Maybe you have just been invited or maybe you simply forgot, but you've got a party tonight and need to take something. Here are some ideas you might want to try:

— Buy (or make) some hummus. Put it in a bowl and cut out red bell peppers to make a jack o'lantern face. Cut more bell peppers for dipping and place around the bowl.

— Take a block of cream cheese and pour hot pepper jelly on top. Serve with Ritz crackers.

— Buy a white layer cake frosted with white icing. Then use candies to decorate it any way you want. For Halloween, try little candy pumpkins around the bottom and piled on top.

— Premade Phyllo cups are great to keep on hand for emergencies. You can fill them with a pimiento-like cheese dip or a premade cheesecake filling and top with a strawberry.

— Or try this recipe for Guacamole with Black Beans.

## COSTUMES

Last-minute homemade costumes may require rummaging through closets and storage areas and being creative with the treasures you find. If you need something quick, easy and clever, here are some of the best ideas we found at halloween.com. Most can be made with things that you may already have around

the house.

— Carry a quarter and a hammer. What are you? A quarter-pounder.

— Dress in pink and carry a feather. What are you? Tickled pink.

— Wear all black and put a postage stamp (enlarged if possible) on your chest. What are you? Blackmail.

— Wrap yourself in wrapping paper with a tag: "From: God, To: Women" What are you? God's gift to women.

— Attach sugar-cubes (or candy) all over yourself. What are you? Sugar-Daddy or Sugar-Momma.

— Tie an old CD around your neck and carry a lighter. What are you? A CD burner? (DVDs work well, too.)

— Quarter (or preferably enlarged photocopy of one) taped to your back. What are you? A quarter-back.

— Got an old black leather jacket? Hair gel? Jeans? '50s guy.

— Put a piece of Styrofoam beneath an old T-shirt. Stab a fork through it (careful!). You are 'done.'

— Affix one couch cushion to the front of you and one to the back. What are you? The lost TV remote.

— Cowboy hat, boots, corduroy? Instant cowboy.

— Bridal gown and sneakers? What are you? Runaway bride.

— Catcher's glove, loaf of rye bread. Attach the bread to you, wear the glove. Catcher in the rye.

— Dress in a nice suit. Attach legal documents to yourself. What are you? A lawsuit.

## TREATS FOR THE TRICK-OR-TREATERS

Have you run out of candy but don't want to dash to the store for late trick-or-treaters? Rummage around your pantry to find these goodies. They may not be as good as candy, but at least you won't have to turn off all the lights

and hide upstairs.

— Small boxes of raisins.

— Any individually wrapped snacks, from fruit snack bags to small bags of chips.

— Unsharpened pencils and stickers.

— Take store-bought or homemade cookies and wrap a few in a sandwich bag with a ribbon. (Only offer to children you know well.)

— The same can be done with loose candy, such as candy corn or boxed snacks, such as Teddy Grahams or pretzels. Take a few and wrap in a sandwich bag, tie with a pretty ribbon.

— Or avoid the candy route all together and stock up on children's books from thrift stores or garage sales.

## BABY-SITTER

You just got invited to a party at the last minute and you need a babysitter, or maybe your usual one just canceled. Here are some steps for finding someone.

— Contact a baby-sitting service. Sites such as [seekingsittersstcharles.com](http://seekingsittersstcharles.com) and [sittercity.com](http://sittercity.com) are professional sitter referral services. They'll take a cut, but you also have peace of mind knowing these people are prescreened.

— Network. If you are in a pinch, use Twitter or Facebook to ask your friends if they are available to help or if they know of a good baby-sitter. You could get an answer within seconds.

— Set up a reciprocal baby-sitting relationship with another couple, preferably a parent of one of your kids' friends. If you start a good relationship, trading baby-sitting dates, it will be easy to call at the last-minute and ask for help.

— Have a pool of prescreened sitters ready. A good place to look is day-care centers. Their teachers often work evenings baby-sitting for extra cash.

## CLEAN YOUR HOUSE

— Make a good first impression. When your guests walk in the front door, let them see a tidy room. Even if the rest of your home isn't perfect, the first

room should be clean.

— Smelly air can really make your house seem dirty. Plug in some air fresheners, spray a home scent or burn some candles about 30 minutes before guests arrive.

— Don't leave a giant pile of papers on your desk, coffee table or countertops. It makes your house look cluttered. Stuff your paperwork into a large Tupperware or plastic container. Don't put items away now. You don't have time. Just get them out of sight.

— Make sure your sink isn't full of dirty dishes. If you don't have time to do your dishes, put them in the dishwasher or fill up a bucket with soapy water and set the dishes inside the bucket. Hide the bucket.

— If you have "stuff" on the floor like pet toys, dirty clothes or kids toys, then it might be a good idea to keep an empty laundry basket around. Fill it up and stash the basket in the laundry room.

— Most likely, you're guests will visit in the family room or kitchen. To clean the room quickly, grab two washcloths, one damp and one dry. Quickly wipe off picture frames, mirrors and countertops, first with the damp, then the dry rag.

— For the bathroom, try disinfectant wipes. Wipe down the sink and around the tub. Grab two to three more wipes, and quickly wipe the corners of the bathroom floor to pick up hair and dust. Finally, take another wipe and wipe down the outside of the toilet. Pour your toilet cleaning product into the toilet, give it a quick scrub and flush.