

The beginning of the beginning



Welp, here it is. Just a few short weeks until my favorite holiday. And that means it's time to get serious about preparations. From the BBQ party to the taking over of the

driveway, now is the beginning of the beginning.

Still learning lessons

Yup. I go into the Storeroom of Doom to pick out the leftover goody bags from last year, so I can get started filling out the ones I need for this year. And I am schooled.



**Love them
plastic
containers!**

I was super smart last year and packed everything away in those great plastic storage containers (yay, Wal-Mart!). And then I was super dumb by not labeling any of them.

Moreover, I was even dumber (which makes me both sides of dumb and dumber, I guess) by putting the goody bag items all the way in the back of the storeroom. Duh.

I mean, the first thing, the very first thing, to work on is always going to be the goody bags. I have to order most of

that stuff online, so I like to leave plenty of lead time for adjustments.

Ah, well, it's important to try to learn something new every day. I guess. My back would prefer less learning and more planning.

The stuff of nightmares

Okay, not so much. My goody bags are more goody than scary, but I do like to add as much themed stuff as possible.



Try having a 6-year old carry one of these!

Still, I found much excess from last year to help build this year's bags. Despite that, I recognize some filler needs. Coloring books and crayons for the little boys and girls. Some toy or novelty for the bigger boys and girls.

I am switching from bags of comics to trade paperback collections this year. Most of these come from collections I have replaced with hardcover editions, so they just take up space.

I am concerned, however, that some of these goody bags may weigh more than the smaller kids who visit. Hey, that's what parents are for!

Dollar Tree

An increasing amount of my purchases for Halloween goody bags come from here these days. The really cool stuff you have to order online, it's rarely supplied to the stores.



**Halloween
snow
globes...so
cool!**

The “everything is a dollar” is both a good and not so great value for me. Some stuff, like those glowing footballs above, are awesome adds for just a buck. Other times, it would be nice to get some bulk price deals.

Also, I tend to roam the store for my miscellaneous filler items. Candles, action figures, coloring books and crayons, that sort of stuff.

The only “downside” to Dollar Tree is that they have no free shipping. Free pick-up only. Meh. But, I get the marketing ploy (I used to work retail, after all).

Oriental Trading

Still one of the best places for any type of themed item. They're not always cheap, except in quality.



**It comes from
the Orient!**

To be fair, I've gotten a lot of stuff from them that turned out just fine, but the percentage of "fails" with their merchandise is statistically relevant. They are good at replacing for no cost, but it's a time thing with me, more than customer service.

That aside, the breadth of selections for Halloween are fun. Especially nice are their plush items and their lighted items. They make superb goody bag filler. Plus, they are my go-to seller for the plastic bags I use for all the goodies.

Wal-Mart

Whenever you are looking for miscellaneous stuff at low prices, Wal-Mart is a good place to add to your stops.

In the old days, I used to shop Halloween throughout the year at Wal-Mart. My financial situation is improved enough where I don't have to do that anymore, but sometimes, I will roam through the clearance section just to see if there is stuff I should pick up and store away.

I do miss the days of buying \$1 DVD's though. Nothing below \$3 these days and that's a bit much, taken in all with the rest of the bag stuffers. Hmm, we'll see how I design next year.

The beginning of the beginning

Last year, I actually had to start much earlier. It was the first time I was trying the new foam blocks and staging

concept. The whole thing turned out better than I expected.

This year, I have all those concrete edging stones and foam blocks painted, so it's only set up. I say "only", but this year is more ambitious from a posing and spatial alignment. I am nervous about pulling it off.

I'm already planning out the party menu and, as you can see, am making good progress on the goody bags. Still, I know my plans and challenges. No matter how much of a head start it appears I have, I know this is only the beginning of the beginning.