

Holiday Greeting Card System

By Janice Scissors

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Sending out Holiday greeting cards can be a huge project that you may come to dread each year. This is supposed to be something you want to do, not feel obligated to do it. You do not have to send cards out if you don't want to. But if you do send them out, it will be a lot more enjoyable with a system that helps you from becoming overwhelmed.

Here is a 6 step a system that will work for you year after year. If you start by early to mid November and work the steps a little each week, you should be ready to mail out all the cards by early December. If you get a later start then you will need to put in more effort during a shorter period of time. But remember, once the first two steps are completed you will save a lot of time next year and every year after that.

1. Write out your list.
2. Divide list into sub-lists. Update addresses.
3. Buy cards.
4. Address envelopes.
5. Insert photos, newsletter, personal notes, or just sign the card.
6. Stamp and mail.

Step 1: Write out the names of people you want to send cards to.

The first step is to look at your address/phone book and write out all the names of the people you want to send cards to this year. Be selective. You don't have to send to everyone. Write these on a separate piece of paper or type them into your computer. Don't worry about the addresses now; you'll work on those in the next step.

If you already have a list from last year then just add or delete names as needed. Be sure to review the list a second or even third time and decide if there are any more names you can cross off the list. Remember, you don't have to send cards to everyone.

Step 2: Divide into sub-lists. Update addresses.

This step will take a little time to set up depending on how many people you have on your list. But it's time well spent to help simplify the task of sending out greeting cards

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this year and many years to come.

1. Take several sheets of paper. Label each sheet with the categories listed below.
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Co-workers/Business acquaintances
 - Neighbors
 - Others (mail person, hairdresser, school teacher, etc.)
2. Now write the name of each person/family you want to send a card to under the appropriate category. Do not add the addresses yet. You are just dividing the names right now.
3. Once all the names are listed in their categories you will want to mark next to the name which kind of card you want to send. A Christmas card, a Hanukkah card, or a Seasons Greeting card. A generic Seasons Greeting card can be sent to most people if you aren't sure about their religion.
4. Now you can make your final list with the addresses included. You'll do this by making a separate list for each group and each kind of card you are sending. For example:

- Friends – Christmas
- Friends - Hanukkah
- Friends - Season Greetings

Customize for the people on your list. Several categories can go on the same page if you only have a few people in each. You might want to include first names of the family members on this list. This will help if you like to personalize the inside of the cards.

This is now your master list from which you will determine what kind and how many cards you'll need to buy. It will help you prioritize who you want to send the cards out to if you don't have enough time to get to them all. If you want you can even list the names in each category in order of importance. You may want your sister who lives out of town on the top of the list and your 2nd cousin you rarely talk to, on the bottom of the list.

Step 3: Buying your cards.

1. If you have cards left over from last year be sure to check them out before shopping.
2. Look at your categories and determine how many of each kind of card you will need.
3. Subtract the number of left over cards you can use in each category and this will give you the minimum number of cards to purchase.
4. Try to find boxes that are close to the number of cards you need with maybe a few

extra. You really don't want to store a lot of boxes of unused cards each year.

Step 4: Addressing the envelopes.

1. To make it easy to keep track of which ones you've addressed and to make it portable, you can put the printed lists in plastic page protectors. Check off each name with a dry erase marker once the envelope is completed. Although they are dry erase markers I have found that a damp tissue works best to remove the marks when you're completely done with addressing the envelopes.
2. Start with the category that is most important to you and work from there.
3. You can sign the cards at this time and put them inside the envelopes or you can stack the cards with the envelopes to be personalized later. Don't seal the envelopes now because you may want to insert a newsletter or photo right before mailing it.
4. If you make the sheets portable (see number 1) then you can take the addresses, cards, and envelopes with you while waiting for your child's dance lesson, music lesson, etc. to be done. You can also address them while watching TV in the evenings.

Step 5: Insert a newsletter, photo, etc.

This is where you will insert a newsletter, photo, personal note, or just sign the card. If you don't normally personalize your cards other than signing them you can complete this step at the same time as step 4.

Step 6: Stamp and mail envelopes.

Stamp the envelopes and mail them at the proper time. Here is a list of suggested dates the United States Postal System puts out for the latest days to mail cards and packages.

- Dec. 4 Military mail destined for Iraq or Afghanistan
- Dec 11 Military mail to other international destinations
- Dec 15 Parcel Post
- Dec 20 First Class Mail
- Dec 20 Priority Mail
- Dec 22 Express Mail

Dec. 17 is the busiest mailing day of the year. Buy your stamps now and plan on mailing your cards and packages before that date.