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Holiday Card Etiquette Rules You Should Stop Ignoring

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A little lesson in manners to keep the season—and your holiday greetings



JESSICA RUSCELLO/SHUTTERSTOCK

It's that time of year

Winter is officially upon us, which means that it's time to dust off the pen, paper, and stamps for a session of good, old-fashioned, hand-written holiday card signing. But whether you've chosen to go with modern photo cards or traditional boxed cards, there are etiquette rules that come along with sending out these joyous, end-of-the-year good wishes. We've turned to [Jodi Smith](#), etiquette consultant, and Vikki Gutierrez Isaacson, owner of [Playa Paper](#), to learn the holiday-card etiquette rules that will keep the season merry and bright.



LAURA BARTLETT/SHUTTERSTOCK

No-boasting zone

If you choose to include a few highlights from this past year in your holiday card, it's best to just stick to the facts—no need to boast or brag or include *all* of the details about your exotic vacations, awards you won at work, or the exact weight of your daughter's new engagement ring, Smith says. People receiving your holiday letters already like you. No need to impress them; just share from your heart. If you're stuck on what to write try these [Christmas card messages](#).



LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS/SHUTTERSTOCK

It's okay to add some humor

The holidays are a time to reflect, look forward to the New Year...and laugh at all of the great moments from the past 12 months. So, don't be afraid to include a funny story or two—just keep it brief, Smith shares. The details, supporting facts or funny stories are what will make your holiday card truly stand out. Don't just tell your friends and family that your dog is smart. Tell them about the time she hid your car keys behind your rarely used exercise bike to delay a visit to the vet. For a little inspiration, check out these [memorable holiday greeting card stories](#).



HEDWIGA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Addressing your envelope

Please, write legibly. If it's been a while since you used a pen as opposed to a keyboard, do a few practice runs on a scratch piece of paper before putting your hand to the actual envelope, recommends Isaacson. And be sure to use a pen that contrasts with your holiday envelope so that the ink is easily readable. For example, using a blue pen on a blue Hanukkah envelope makes it difficult to read. And please avoid using address labels unless it's absolutely necessary. Those sticky tabs make the cards feel less personal. If you need to brush up on your punctuation, here's [how to pluralize last names that end in "s."](#)



JEFF BLACKLER/SHUTTERSTOCK

Stamp selection

Resist the temptation to use your company's postage meter to send out holiday cards. Saving money may be critical throughout the year, but affixing a real postage stamp is a great way to express your personality—and it makes your cards look less cookie cutter and more personal, notes Isaacson. The U.S. Post Office has done an amazing job of curating beautiful designs and turning postage stamps into little works of art to make your holiday envelopes pop—plus it makes a beautiful impression before your card is even opened. Find another way to save money—try one of these [free printable Christmas cards](#).



SNEZANA IGNJATOVIC/SHUTTERSTOCK

Selecting the right photo

If you're having photo cards made, select a photo that captures a special moment—even if it's not picture-perfect, says Isaacson. Let's face it: It's hard to get all the kids to focus in the same direction at the same time and not blink, and that's okay. If your little one's attention is elsewhere at the moment, it might be good for a laugh, like these [25 family photos that are hilariously awkward](#). Also, choose an image crop—horizontal or vertical—that complements the card design.



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Wish them well

This holiday card is for someone else...so avoid making it all about you, you, and you, Smith says. In addition to the updates about your life, be sure to include well wishes to the card's recipients *and* to their families. Offer positive thoughts if you know that someone's grandparent is ill or lots of luck to the son or daughter who has mid-term exams to look forward to in the New Year. After all, the holiday card is part of your season's greeting to others. If you're short on something entertaining to say, look up the person's birthday and tell them [what 2020 has in store based on their Chinese zodiac sign](#) or share one of these [classic Christmas quotes](#).

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