

Crabby's holiday survival guide

Applies to: Microsoft Office Access 2007, Excel 2007, OneNote 2007, Outlook 2007, PowerPoint 2007, Publisher 2007, Word 2007, Access 2003, Excel 2003, OneNote 2003, Outlook 2003, PowerPoint 2003, Publisher 2003, Word 2003, Access 2002, Excel 2002, Outlook 2002, PowerPoint 2002, Publisher 2002, Word 2002

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The Crabby Office Lady

There comes a moment every year when I find myself obligated to take up my machete of influence and cut a swath of clarity as we approach the holiday season together. This is that moment.

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Winter is starting to show itself in my neck of the woods. Brrr. The leaves have not all fallen, though, and so it feels like an in-between season. Even as I write this, scary witches, ghoulish ghosts, and garish Hannah Montanas across this great land of ours are preparing to canvas their neighborhoods, begging for sweets.

This column is about the holidays, those making their entrance this time of year, dragging along cheer, gluttony, and in-laws. But before you've wassailed yourself into a stupor, remember, you've got help: Office is your elf.

Today we're going over five basic aspects of surviving this year's holiday season:



NOTE In this column I'll be linking to lots of Office templates. If you're feeling out of the loop when it comes to customizing a template or you're not even sure what a template is, I suggest you visit our [Templates help](#) page.

The family greeting: Make it easy on yourself

I know you: You're already thinking about the holiday card/newsletter/fruitcake you're going to send out to all your friends, family, and enemies (hmmm, wonder who's getting the fruitcake?). But before you get started, take this moment — this very narrow window of opportunity before every grocery store, elevator, and hair salon starts piping in "Silver Bells" — to think hard:

1. What are you going to do this year for the holidays? How much effort do you want to exert?
2. Who on your list deserves what (also known as "naughty or nice")?

3. How can you do all this up right and retain those last few scraps of sanity (not to mention dignity)?

NOTE While I can help you with #1 and #3, you're on your own with #2 (although if you catch me around the egg nog, I might suggest a few tips based on my past experiences as both giver and receiver).

Newsletters

If you're considering catching your family and friends up on your life with a newsletter, I suggest, in the interest of keeping your recipients' interest, that you:

- Keep it as short as possible (while still providing all the detailed information that likely only Granny will find interesting).
- Print it on paper that isn't too...busy. As in, make sure the background, color, and/or border won't induce a spontaneous seizure.
- Add photos or clip art (or both) to keep it interesting.
- Don't get bogged down in the process of trying to create it from scratch; download a template, customize it to fit your needs, and presto...you're still a star!

Now, let's hunker down and churn these out in the time it takes to spin a dreidel:

- [Holiday newsletter template](#)
- [Family Christmas newsletter](#)
- [All newsletter templates](#)
- [Clip Art and Media Homepage](#)
- [Images and photos from the Office Marketplace](#)

Holiday card

Now, if it's a holiday card you want to send out, you could, of course, have it done at great expense at a stationery store or use an online photo shop. But you can also create one, print out as many copies as you need, and save yourself a bundle. And many of the Office card templates work with the specialty papers (card stock, envelopes, labels, etc.) that you can buy at an office supply store, so your card will look truly professional. And surprise, surprise, we have ways of helping you do this:

First let's take a look at some card templates:

- [Word Holiday card](#)
- [Word Christmas card](#)
- [Word Kwanzaa card](#)
- [Word Hanukkah card \(with dreidel\)](#)
- [Happy New Year card \(Chinese, half-fold\)](#)
- [Season's Greetings card \(Korean, half-fold\)](#)

I have to come clean: I'm just not that thrilled about using Word to create cards. There are programs better suited for that...

- [Celebrate the holidays using Publisher greeting cards](#)

As well, back in 2005, I created my own holiday card using PowerPoint:

Play Demo

Of course, these little tips don't mean that making the perfect holiday greeting card will be effortless. But between free templates (of which there are plenty on the site), clip art (ditto), and a little creativity, you can get the job done a lot quicker and save more time for, well, the parties (see next section).

Party people

Parties are a big part of the season. While they can be fun, they can also be rather stressful to attend, not to mention throw. Let Crabby help you out, dear; in her day, she was quite the belle of the ball.... So what are you waiting for? An engraved invitation?

- [Holiday party invitation \(for business event\)](#)
- [Company holiday party invitation](#)
- [Thanksgiving invitation](#)
- [Holiday party invitation](#)

Now, of course, if you're throwing a party, you'd better be prepared for it:

- [Party planner](#)
- [Dinner party journal](#)
- [Grocery list with space for brand](#)
- [Holiday place cards](#)
- [Hanukkah place cards \(with menorah\)](#)
- [Thanksgiving place cards](#)
- [Thanksgiving recipe card \(lined\)](#)

Addressing, printing, and mailing (oh, my!)

Now that your card, newsletter, or invitation just screams, "Our family is so wonderful, accomplished, and well-adjusted," you still have to deal with the addressing/printing/ mailing issue (the process of which might blow the lid off the aforementioned wonderfulness).

There is, of course, the option of addressing each envelope by hand and then waiting in line to buy the perfect stamps at the post office the clerk-in-training is on his own behind the counter. But somehow that just sucks the glad tidings out of the season, doesn't it?

While I tend to avoid the **M** words, mail merge (what **M** words did you think I was talking about?) doesn't have to be as difficult as untangling a string of lights. In a nutshell, mail merge is a process whereby you basically create one copy of a card, letter, or whatnot (in Word, Publisher, etc.), and then grab information from a database (such as your address book) and insert each recipient's individual info (name, address, dear so-and-so) into specified fields on this card or letter. It looks personalized, it feels personalized, but only you — and I — know that it's kind of not.

If the mail merge process is still a little blurry to you (whether you're new to it or just rusty from lack of practice), below is a link that offers resources to explain exactly what mail merge is and how to use it:

- Office 2007 [Mail merge I: Use mail merge for mass mailings](#)
- Office 2003 [Mail merge 101: Send letters with ease](#)

Now, how about getting those cards and letters out in time?

- [Stamps.com](#) This is a great way to print USPS-approved postage (including labels) for any mail class and any letter or package right from your desktop.
- [All Office mailing services](#)

The point is that you have choices this year when it comes to addressing and sending out your holiday hellos to every single person in your address book.

The shopping: Start now

You can run, but if you have kids, you definitely can't hide. That's right, it's gift season. So if you haven't started by now, here's the place to do it. Make your lists, plan your budget, and for heaven's sake, rein yourself in! Imagine an inch-tall Suze Orman is sitting on your shoulder, halo gleaming. (YIKES!) Money does not equal love, people (although, now that I think of it, a nice Rolex — nothing too gaudy, now — certainly wouldn't hurt your standing with a certain columnist).

- [Gift shopping list \(red and green\)](#)
- [Gift shopping list \(not red and green\)](#)
- [Personal budget](#)
- [Holiday budget planner](#)

The recovery

It's over. Ahhhh. The guest room is once again your office; you're getting used to your new uniform of sweats and jammies; and now it's time to write the thank-you notes, balance the checkbook, and think again about that gym membership that seemed like such a good idea two months ago.

Don't worry; Crabby won't take you into the holidays and leave you stranded after they're over (unlike some jolly dude in a red pantsuit I know):

- [Credit card use log](#)
- [Record of gifts received](#)
- [Thank you note checklist](#)
- [Thank you cards](#)

A few more holiday links

Yes, folks, I am well aware that each of us celebrates/deals with this time of year in our own special way. (The Crabby household? You can't begin to imagine...) And I also know that I'm going to leave somebody out unintentionally. But here is a partial list of some other resources available to some of you during this time of cheer, goodwill, and hangovers.

Below are some articles having to do with photos and imaging (a big request this time of year):

- [Add a picture directly from your digital camera \(Publisher\)](#)
- [About image compression](#)

"No self-respecting mother would run out of intimidations on the eve of a major holiday." — Erma Bombeck

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the **Was this information helpful?** tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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