

# Cards

Opening a Christmas card during the holidays almost always brings a smile to someone's face. You just have to figure out how to do the process of buying, addressing, and mailing your cards more simply to keep it personally satisfying.

# Decorations

Christmas decorations, holiday music, flickering candles, and warm aromas make a home feel warm and cozy. Decorating your home for the holidays is one thing that lets you "feel" the holidays, so start early.

# Holiday Decorating Simplified

If your decorations cause you more anxiety than enjoyment, it's time to simplify your decorations. This is especially true if you seem to leave more and more of them packed away each year. Put out the ones you really like, and cut down on what you don't like as much. Give away a little each year. Soon it will be simple.

With decorations, some holiday music, flickering candles, and delicious aromas coming from the oven, a home feels warm and cozy. Decorating your home for the holidays is one thing that lets you *feel* the holidays. So the important thing is to get the decorations up early in December so you can fully enjoy them. (But anytime is better than not at all.)

As you put decorations up, weed out the ones you can do without and give them to newlyweds or charities who can use them. Before Christmas is the best time to give them away. After Christmas even charities don't accept them, because they don't have room to store them all year.

## Keep Decorating Simple and Strategic

Limited time can cause you to skimp on the decorating component. To get the most from your limited time and energy, put the decorations up and take them down when it really counts. You're storing your decorations for eleven months of the year, so be sure to get them up on time. Then you can fully enjoy them for the strategic four to six weeks of the holiday season.

## Follow a Holiday Decorating Plan

If you want your decorations up for the holidays, these memorable dates may help you plan.

**Thanksgiving weekend:** Put up outside lights, but don't turn them on yet.

**First weekend in December:** Put up your Christmas tree and other inside decorations

**Nightly in December:** Enjoy your lighted decorations as you anticipate the season.

**New Year's Day:** Decorations come down and get packed away for the next eleven months.

## Celebrate the Setup and Cleanup

Organizing how and when you put up your decorations can make it an anticipated event. Mark your calendar with your decorating plans, turn on some holiday music, and deck the halls! Invite a friend over to help you decorate (then return the favor at her house). Celebrate

with some Christmas cookies when you're finished for the day. Once the holidays are over, people often feel that Christmas ends too soon, and down come the decorations. How do you overcome that short-lived time? By picking the same time to put them up every year, you will simplify the whole process of setup and storage.

### **Tips for Storing Your Holiday Decorations**

- Place your holiday decorations in similar size and color containers to spot them easily.
- Upgrade your containers from cardboard to plastic with secure lids, if you are storing them in the garage, attic, or basement where the temperature varies.
- Label every box clearly with a large, visible label, such as a 4 x 6 card and marker-size letters.
- Choose a labeling system of either marking the boxes with numbers corresponding to your Decoration Storage list (see page 64) or with the contents.
- Keep your Decoration Storage list in this planner so you can find what you need without standing in the cold to do so.
- Let Box #1 be the first-to-open container with everything you want to use first to get you into the holiday spirit, i.e. front door decoration, table runner, special candle, holiday mugs, dinner plates, and Nativity scene.
- Store heat-sensitive items inside your home, such as holiday candles, CDs, and DVDs, in a closet you can access easily.
- Thin out your decorations as you put them up.
- Limit the boxes to items you truly use and love. If you didn't thin out your decorations before Christmas, have two separate boxes for giveaways and discards to put things in you no longer want to keep. Start donating the excess and keep holiday decorating simple!
- Put the containers away in reverse order. In other words, put the ones you'll need last at the back, and put the ones you'll need first in last at the front to make retrieving them easier next year.

## Labeling Holiday Boxes

Why label and organize the Christmas boxes? To save time when pulling out what you really want by organizing scattered bags and falling-apart boxes into one neat space. Organize and simplify the contents. The labels will keep everything at easy reach.

Keep your storage simple and you will reap the rewards of labeled boxes year after year. Here is a numbering suggestion list:

- Box #1 = First to Open
- Box #2 = Front Door Decoration
- Box #3 = Outside Lights
- Box #4 = Christmas Tree
- Box #5 = Favorite Ornaments
- Box #6 = Optional Ornaments
- Box #7 = Holiday Table Settings
- Box #8 = Garlands
- Box #9 = Stockings
- Box #10 = Wreaths

The number and one-word explanation makes it easy to spot what you are looking for. Obviously, some decorations, such as garlands, may require more than one container to store.

If you want to keep a more detailed list, include that on your planning sheet to have close at hand in this notebook.

# Decoration Storage

Box #	Label on Box/ Box Description	Contents	Location