

decorating

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Displaying Christmas Cards

THE FIRST ONE TO ARRIVE LOOKS A LITTLE LONELY PERCHED ON THE MANTEL. A FEW MORE BEGIN TO LOOK FESTIVE. BUT IT'S NOT LONG BEFORE THEY'RE EVERYWHERE, and they just look a mess: Holiday cards overflowing the entry-hall table, taped to mirrors, stuck to the fridge, even crammed into drawers. There must be a better way.

There is. In fact, we've come up with more than a few solutions—ways to keep your cards from becoming clutter, ways to appreciate them more. Each one, after all, is like a little gift, carefully chosen by a friend or family member; as such, it deserves more than a passing glance

and makeshift presentation. Early in the holiday season—right now—you can create a proper place in your home for the cascade of cards to come. With a little care and organization, they can be as cheery and as lovely as any wreath, garland, or string of lights. And since they have such sentimental value, too, there are even ideas for turning cards into more permanent decorations that you can put away, not throw away, and enjoy again next year.

ABOVE: Cards-turned-ornaments are suspended from winter branches in a galvanized bucket. Pewter bowls full of nuts, dried apricots, and dates entice visitors into taking a closer look. For instructions, see next page.

GREETINGS TREE Collect dried branches and arrange them in a bucket, vase, or other vessel; you don't need to add any water. We hung the cards from ribbons in various shades of brown and metallics (right), which blended in with the branches, making the cards appear as if they were floating.

Punch a hole through the top of the closed card (above). String a length of ribbon through the hole, then thread the ends through a bead or two, and tie the ends in a knot or bow. Here's a trick for threading wide ribbon through a small bead: Bend a length of 28-gauge wire in half, and send the ends through the bead so the ends are exposed on one side and the loop on the other. Put the ribbon through the wire loop, and pull on the loose ends of the wire, bringing the ribbon through the bead. If you wish, tie a tassel to the ribbon inside the card, too, so it hangs down. Another variation: Punch two side-by-side holes at the top of the card, thread ribbon ends through from the back, and tie a small bow in front.



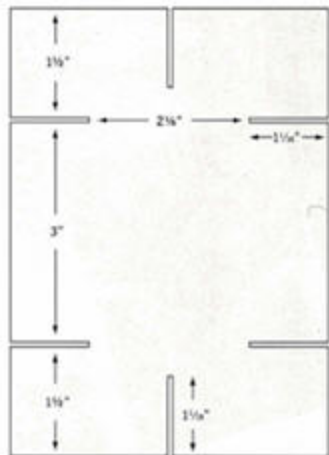
RIBBON STREAMERS Transform a door into a card gallery (left). Cut lengths of ribbon to fit your door; we used three 4-inch-wide chartreuse satin ribbons, and layered a 6½-inch-wide grosgrain ribbon behind the center one. Mark the points on the ribbon from which you want to hang the cards: These are at alternating 7- and 10-inch intervals, so the alternating vertical and horizontal cards appear more evenly spaced. Tie thin ribbon to a double-ring paper clip (above left), and stitch the clips to the marks you made on the ribbons. To hang from door (above right), fasten the ribbon ends to the top of the door with a flat thumbtack, and slip cards into each of the clips. The cards can be removed to be read again or to be changed as new cards arrive, and the ribbons can be reused each year.



HOLIDAY BULLETIN BOARD Make this board, and bring it out once a year to replace a hall mirror or other prominent piece (left). Have Homosote or compressed-paper board cut to size, then cut a piece of fabric 5 inches larger on each side. With a staple gun, attach one fabric edge to back of the board, then the opposite edge, then the remaining two. Outline a pattern for ribbon. Cut two lengths of $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch velvet ribbon for each drawn line. **1** Lay a pair of ribbons along one line; where lines intersect, hammer an upholstery tack through each ribbon, on opposite sides of the line. Lay two ribbons along lines that intersect, and weave them into first pair (we used a tool to ensure right angles), hiding tacks. **2** Tack down two new ribbons where first ribbons overlap them. **3** At each intersection, there are four nails—all concealed by a layer of ribbon. Continue weaving and tacking ribbons. Tack and trim them where they meet the outlined border. Make sure ribbons are taut, since they will hold the cards in place. **4** Use craft glue or a glue gun to attach ribbons to border, stapling the ends on back of board.



HOLIDAY HOUSE OF CARDS Turn old cards into something new—again and again, since you can reconfigure these interlocking cards whenever you like (below left). They're inspired by House of Cards, a classic toy created by the American designers Charles and Ray Eames in the fifties. Use a utility knife (left) to make a cardboard template in the dimensions shown below; make the slits wider than just a single slice. Cut off the back flaps of cards, and discard. Trim all the cards to the size of the template. To cover the plain sides of the card fronts, cover them with wrapping paper (this is a good way to use scraps too small for wrapping a gift): Spray the plain side of the card with Spray Mount adhesive (working in a well-ventilated area), and apply the wrapping paper. Trim the edges of the wrapping paper, if any of your cards are very thin, back them with card stock instead of wrapping paper. Using the template as a guide, cut slits in the cards. Build a house of cards, and lay a stack of extras nearby for guests to play with.





STAR-CLIP STANDS Mini wreaths support whimsical card clips in a special presentation that's worthy of your favorite cards (above). **1.** You'll need a single-wire wreath form for each one; these are 8 and 6 inches in diameter. Cut 18-gauge annealed-iron wire into various lengths, allowing about 10 extra inches for the star shape and for securing the wire to the base. Use round-nose pliers to make the star: About $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from one end, bend the wire down sharply; repeat, bending $\frac{1}{4}$ inch away at a less severe angle; continue, bending the wire eight times, as shown, creating an eight-pointed star. Wrap the other end of the wire tightly, several times, around the wreath form so the star is upright and secure. Add more stars to the wreath form if you like. **2.** To cover the wreath form with greenery, snip the tips of evergreen branches; the ones used here are cypress. Use green floral wire to secure the cut end of a sprig or two to the wreath form; do not cut the wire. Lay more greenery onto the wreath form, overlapping the first sprigs by about half, and wrap these new sprigs with the wire. Continue adding greenery all the way around the wire form, tucking last sprigs' ends under the first sprig. Slip cards into the stars.

