



# Season's greetings

**USING YOUR OWN PHOTOGRAPHS TO CREATE GREETING CARDS IS A GREAT WAY TO SEND UNIQUE, PERSONALISED MESSAGES TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS AT ANY TIME OF THE YEAR – NOT JUST AT CHRISTMAS, AS RICHARD LANE EXPLAINS...**

AT SOME POINT in September, the shelves of greeting cards shops and supermarkets start to fill with a bewildering array of Christmas cards, giving shoppers more than enough time to stock up before the festive season begins.

With such a wide variety of cards available, why bother to make your own, you might ask? But Christmas time, perhaps more than any other, is when we think of those dear to us and, even if you can't afford to send each of them a gift, taking the time to make a unique

personalised card for them shows that you care.

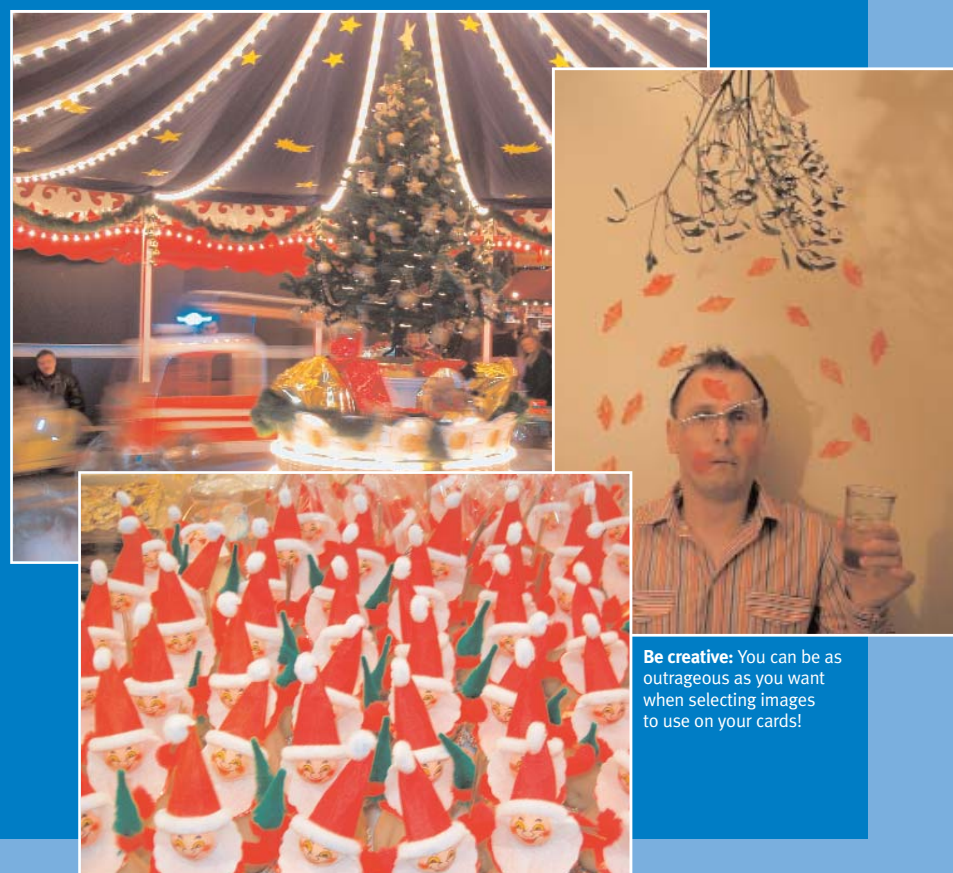
One of the great characteristics of photography, digital in particular, is that it can be used to produce many identical copies of the same image, and this makes it ideal for making greeting cards. Of course, home-made cards don't only have to feature traditional Christmassy images; indeed, they are a good way of keeping family and friends abreast of significant developments – marriages, engagements, new babies and new homes – throughout the year.

## Choose your image

There are many photographs that would make great Christmas cards and your choice depends on whether you want to select an image from those you took earlier in the year, or take a new photo especially for the job.

Both of these options have their merits. Most of us have photos in our collections that we are really proud of and putting them on the front of a glossy greeting card is a very good way of getting them seen. Your choice of image depends on how festive you wish to be. For the traditional look, winter landscapes and snow scenes always work well, summer holidays less so – unless you visited the Holy Lands. Some photos from important family events also work well on Christmas cards, such as those of new babies and occasions when people dress up, such as weddings and birthdays.

Taking a new photograph especially for your card allows you to let your imagination run wild. You can make your card topical, by featuring an up-to-date photo of the younger members of the family, or even this year's Christmas lights in Oxford Street. You also have the chance to make your photo as outrageously festive as you wish – use your camera's self-timer or remote control to take shots of you and the kids decorating the Christmas tree, or even dress yourselves up as Santa and his little helpers!



**Be creative:** You can be as outrageous as you want when selecting images to use on your cards!

## Scissors, software, or World Wide Web?

Once you have your photo you need to turn it into a greeting card. At its simplest, a photo greeting card is just a piece of folded card with a photo stuck to the front. Using this method, cards are easy for all members of the family to make and have a home-spun charm to them that many find appealing. Such hand-made cards can be simple – a beautifully printed photo tastefully displayed on a clean white card, or wonderfully over the top – a fun snap adorned with glitter and ribbons. They are what you make them!

Using software or the services of a website will almost certainly give your cards a more professional look. For most people there is no need to purchase specialist software, as the free software supplied with Olympus digital cameras can be used. If you have OLYMPUS Master Plus or CAMEDIA Master, select the Postcard option from the main menu. Using the Browse function, choose the photo you want to use, then drag and drop it into the basic postcard template in the middle of the screen. If you want a traditional folded card, simply choose the second option from the Basic templates on the right of the screen. This positions the photo in one half of the sheet of card, so it can be folded. If the photo is the wrong way around it can be rotated using the drop-down menu at the top of the screen. A suitable message can also be applied using the Text function before the card is finally printed.

If you use OLYMPUS Master 2, first find the image that you want to use in the folders or albums on the left of the screen and open it. You can then add a message using the Insert Text option on the right of the screen. Then select Photo Print from the Print Setting drop-down menu and choose either the second or third layout option from the right of the screen to position the photo in one half of the sheet of card. Once again, if the orientation of the photo is incorrect it can be rotated by clicking on the photo and using the controls that appear below the layout, before final printing.

A number of websites exist that will allow you to turn your photos into professional-looking greeting cards on-line and have them delivered straight to your door. Your cards can feature a single image, or a variety of photos displayed in any one of the selection of templates on offer. Cards are usually supplied with envelopes and the more you order the cheaper they become. Here are three of our favourite sites...



### www.photobox.co.uk

The highly acclaimed website PhotoBox produces deluxe glossy greeting cards up to 142.5mm x 197mm in size. There may not be as wide a selection of designs on offer as on VistaPrint or Snapfish, but PhotoBox is straightforward and easy to use. For many people, Christmas is about giving and PhotoBox is a sponsor of the Alzheimer's Society's Million Memories campaign and an optional 10 per cent of the net order revenue (excluding P+P and VAT) can be donated to the charity. Alternatively five per cent can be donated to TreeHouse, the national charity for autism education.

### www.snapfish.co.uk

Inexpensive options from Snapfish include single-sided and double-sided 8" x 4" photo cards, available in both matt and gloss finish. Custom-made 7" x 5" folded greeting cards look more impressive and are available in a wide variety of designs, some of which can feature more than one photo. Photos are easily dragged and dropped into place from an album displayed on the right of the screen. Photographs can also be added to the inside of cards along with accompanying text, making this option an ideal choice for people who like to send illustrated 'round robin' letters to family and friends at Christmas.



### www.vistaprint.co.uk

VistaPrint offers a similar range of cards to Snapfish, with glossy 210mm x 95mm single- and double-sided cards, and traditional 182mm x 117mm folded photo cards. Each photo card design is capable of featuring multiple images on the front and advanced editing tools allow both photos and captions to be individually positioned. The inside of cards can be personalised with verses selected from the drop-down list provided, or with your own text and photos. For that extra festive touch, VistaPrint also prints cards with glamorous foil accents and, should you wish to double check your design before printing it, you can order a PDF proof to be sent to you by email.



## toptips

- 1 Think ahead** If you find yourself photographing a snowy scene in January, make a mental note to put it on the list to be considered for that year's Christmas card.
- 2 Dare to be different** Your cards don't have to all feature the same photo, so why not 'cherry-pick' different photos from your album to suit the recipients?
- 3 Film fan** If you are a 35mm photographer, an inexpensive way to get lots of copies of the same photo is to take the same photograph 36 times on one roll of film. Then, if you need more than 36 prints, just order an extra set at the time of processing. This often works out significantly cheaper than taking one photo and subsequently ordering lots of reprints.
- 4 Location, location, location** Christmas fairs, especially those in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, are great locations for taking atmospheric greeting-card photos. Or give your cards a local feel by photographing the Christmas lights in your own high street.
- 5 Crafty** Hobby shops and craft stores are a great source of fancy cards and foils, as well as ribbons and other decorations that can be used to liven up hand-made cards.
- 6 Act now** Christmas is just around the corner so, unless you want to deliver your cards by hand, you'd better get cracking!