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With scissors and paste you can

Personalize Your Greeting

by Marguerite Root

IN THE regalia of tinsel and glistening balls and colored lights that characterize the holiday season, greeting cards still claim a spot of the limelight. Over and above the glare that commercialism has given to Christmas, still the person with a hint of the sentimental in her nature has a yen to scatter random samples of the season's best wishes—to revert back to the warm mutual friendliness of "Merry Christmas to Aunt Susie from your only niece—and a Happy New Year too." Christmas just isn't Christmas unless part of the thrill of the season is shared among friends.

If you want to put a bit of yourself into your Christmas greetings, if you want cards that have a little something that can't be found on any counter in any store decked out for Christmas, and if you want to get a real bang out of this business of saying "Merry Christmas," you will *make* your cards.

A touch of ingenuity and a simple application of common sense design are the only pre-requisites. If you have had enough practice working with your hands so that you can manipulate materials easily, you pass directly into the advanced section. But beginners, too, can join.

The design you create is the all-important factor. No matter how perfect your technique may be, your result is a failure if it isn't basically pleasing. You can arrive at an idea by cutting paper into geometric shapes and fitting them together abstractly. Perhaps their arrangement will give you a hint of something real and you can chew the end of your pencil and create anything from a stylized rocking horse to a Christmas tree.

Or perhaps you prefer the abstractness. That's all right too. Repeats of the

most simple shapes you can imagine make extremely satisfying designs—and why can't they be used on Christmas cards? Another approach is sketching. You draw a line or two and then squint and erase and draw over and mentally weigh the results in regard to shape, size relations, and distribution of light and dark. But don't stop until you are really satisfied. Work until you can beam with pride over your creation.

Here's just a suggestion. Steer clear of those natural looking poinsettias and sprigs of realistic holly. Get in the groove of conventionalism and your cards will be much more fun and much smarter.

There are innumerable methods that can be used in the actual carrying out of the design, and here again a pinch of ingenuity is invaluable. Stenciling is one process that offers a world of possibilities. Here's the procedure in one easy lesson, in case you haven't the faintest idea about how it's done. Each color of your design, now perfected, is cut into a separate stencil. If the skirt and hair ribbon of your little figure are to be red, cut those shapes out in their correct position, but leave the sweater for the blue stencil, and then cut still another piece for the yellow hands and face and legs. Oil paint applied in staccato taps of a stiff-bristled, blunt-pointed stencil brush, complete the details. Of course, now that you have stencils you can go into real mass production.

Paper appliqué or simple cut-out designs are ever popular and easy as pie to work out. And, incidentally, the idea involves two possibilities. You can cut the shapes and paste them on a solid background or you can cut pieces out

of the main card and face the back so that touches of color show through as design. Bits of cloth—stripes, prints, or plains—can be used in the same way if you want novelty.

Have you every tried any stick printing? One end of a match or meat skewer or any such instrument is cut to form a triangle or square or circle and then it is dipped into tempera and stamped onto the paper in much the same fashion as you would handle any printing set.

In the realm of stamped designs, block prints still claim an important place. A razor blade and a piece of linoleum constitute the equipment. Finer work and intricate details, however, can be more easily accomplished if you buy or borrow a set of real cutting tools.

To make your cards really individual, select colors and papers that are smart. Newspaper offices are a good source of novelty papers with the different glazed or pebbled surfaces.

If you want to do something really new, then try some of that very thin sheet metal—or incorporate yarn, string or absorbent cotton in your idea. Then gather up your scissors and paste and paper and get started. Remember, Christmas cards aren't always planned—they may just evolve.

