



Good Day,

My letter this month is not as Tech-nically inclined as I would normally send, but I found a tidbit that I think is wonderfully appropriate for the season. As a consultant, this is the time of year when I get requests for help on the annual "Family Holiday Letter" to replace those tedious Holiday cards. I know I promised information on SPAM (and no, I am a terrible cook and don't have a single SPAM recipe to share!) but I thought, hey, why not help everyone else get something good done! Once again, if you want something fancy, I would love to come give a hand!

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#### Holiday Letter Tips

All of us computer users may as well put that investment to some good work this season. I abhor saying it, but I can't stand making out Christmas cards. I like to be personal about sending them out, but between paper cuts, a gummy tongue, and scribbling my signature into an arthritic state, Christmas cards are my least favorite experience of the year (I actually like doing my taxes!) What makes it painless and personal is creating a Holiday letter- or for us, a Winter Greeting. Telling stories about our year, our gains and losses, our progress, seems like a much better way to keep in touch with the ones we love! So, here are some tips... (I got this from Mary Hunt, the creator of The Cheapskate Monthly newsletter)

**CONTENT:** Tell about the past year using character sketches of family members. Entertain your readers with anecdotes that show rather than describe just how brilliant and clever your family members are. Good quotes, especially from little ones and backseat conversations, are pure gold. Interview your kids to come up with great material.

**APPEARANCE:** If your letter doesn't immediately captivate your reader, the best content in the world will go straight into the trashcan. The care you display in the visual preparation of the letter shows the respect you have for your reader.

**LENGTH:** Keep it to two pages, three at the most. There's beauty in simplicity. One woman I know sent me a 28-page, two-sided (single-spaced) recount of every single day of the entire year. Your goal is to leave your readers wishing for more, not pleading for less.

**WHITE SPACE:** This is the area on a page that is not covered by print. If you are conscious of big blank white spaces, you have too much white space. If you squint your eyes and the entire page looks gray, not enough. A judicious use of white space gives your readers' eyes a chance to rest.

**MARGINS:** Your margins should be about one and a half inches at the top of the paper and at least one inch at the bottom, right and left of the paper.

**FONTS:** Control yourself. Even though you have 579 choices readily available, use no more than three fonts in the same letter. Two is better.

**PUNCTUATION:** When you care enough to punctuate correctly, you show respect for your readers' intelligence. For a quick refresher course, visit <http://dictionary.reference.com/writing/>

**PICTURES:** You can increase your letter's value by including special photos. Make sure your pictures do not collide with your text by creating buffer space. When it comes to photos and clip art: more is tacky, less is lovely.

**PROOFREAD:** It's difficult to find your own errors and spell checkers are not completely reliable. Ask a couple of people to proofread your final version.

**WRITE SIMPLY:** When you have a choice between a long word and a short word, go with the short one. Strip every sentence so that only the cleanest components remain. Examine every word and keep only those that are necessary. Don't say, "at this point in time" when you can say "now."

**ETIQUETTE:** The purpose of your family letter is to reacquaint readers with your family and to convey your wishes for their joyful holiday. Keep to these rules:

- No press releases. This is not the right time to review your amazing career and most recent promotion.
- No fund-raising. You do have a captive audience, but curb the urge to ask for sponsors to send money for your kids' jog-a-thon.
- No sales pitches. It's not cool to include an invitation to your next Tupperware party or mention that you have an amazing business opportunity to share.

**START NOW:** Letters thrown together at the last minute usually show it.

### **This Month on Evtechie.com...**

When I do the newsletter, I add new content to my site. Mind you, there is so little time for new content- but I promised SPAM, so I am giving you SPAM tips... How to avoid, transform, report, and better limit the mess of e-mail advertisers...The truth about SPAM-outside of the can! Ideas that will help you get a better (not bitter) handle on filtering out the mess and keeping your privacy!

<http://www.evtechie.com>

### TechieTip...

Before passing on the latest chain letter....

Do you remember the days of getting a message in the mail from a friend, stating that if you didn't "pass the letter on to seven people you would have the worst luck in the world, and WOW- my friend passed it on and won the lottery" Those letters still exist, but come to us electronically. If you find a request for money, a message that states you'll get free tickets for passing it on, a sob/scary story about someone who needs your help by chain mailing, or some urgent message that you have a virus and need to delete files from your computer- **STOP!** I can guarantee you are only helping to propagate the mass mailing messes on the internet, and in some cases, causing harm to your own machine. Check your facts on <http://urbanlegends.com/> - their search engine will take the basic facts "dying child Disney" and probably return to you the true facts about the issue at hand. If you still don't know, forward it to me!

### Coming Next Time

How to better organize the the computer file clutter in your e-mail accounts!

Until then, I thank you for your continued support and wish you a wonderful Thanksgiving,

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