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Shoot the right photos for DIY cards

Kavita Kukday-Deb

The year is almost slipping by and it's time again to ring in the New Year with cards and wall calendars. Be it Diwali, Christmas or New Year's Eve, the idea behind exchanging cards has always been about conveying your wishes to friends and family.

But unfortunately, we are normally restricted to conveying the wishes of card companies instead of our own. This year, you can break free from the limited pool of cards in the market and add your own colour by making your own cards and calendars. Thanks to technology, taking good pictures and even printing them into cards is no longer a complex process. Here are a few tips to help make good customised cards.

Shoot the right pictures: A good card starts with a good picture. New Year's cards are normally about bringing in the cheer, family pictures and portraits make a good idea and so do pictures of the festivities. The biggest problem though while shooting pictures of the lights and festivities is that these are normally taken at night time. A very important consideration for low

light photos is holding the camera rock still. A tripod is a good idea for such pictures, but in an absence of one, try making a makeshift tripod. Use a tree or a wall or a bench nearby to hold your camera still while you try to capture the lights.

Compensate for ISO: Another good way to compensate for low light setting is to increase the ISO setting on your camera. The downside of increasing the ISO is of course the graininess that this will add to your photographs. So keep the ISO setting slightly below 400 if you can and

that should do the trick. Try not to go any higher if you don't want to risk a lot of noise creeping into your shots. The small digital camera screen might not show but the graininess will stand out in prints, especially if you are attempting to get the larger ones.

Keep it tight: Closer is always better, especially for pictures for cards or calendars. So try and get tight shots and emphasize the subject. Wide-angle photos in which the subject gets lost in the background clutter normally make terrible pictures for cards and such. So try and zoom in tight for pictures of people and look for subtle details to capture up close even when you are taking still-life shots, like the decorations, Christmas trees or parties.



Print them: Once done with picking the pictures you want for cards or wall calendars, you need to decide on where to print these. Of course going to a photo shop in the neighborhood is an option but with sites like ZoomIn (www.zoomin.com) and Snapfish (www1.snapfish.in) it's easier to do it from home. So after your photos are organised, simply upload them and use the site's tools to lay out your calendars and cards. There are simple steps to do here like sizing the picture right and picking the spot to lay them out in the right place. Another good idea is to customise the calendar with important dates (birthdays, anniversaries and such).

This will make the wall calendar extra special for friends and family. There are also options to add text and personalise them with special phrases or wishes for every single recipient.

Next you would just need to order enough copies for everyone on your list and the sites will have them professionally printed and mailed to you. Alternatively, you can arrange to send them directly to your recipients thus saving you the postage. That's it you are done. Isn't this much better than spending endless hours in the card shop and settling for a card that might not even come close to saying what you really want?

Pick large pictures: Once you are done shooting pictures for your cards and calendars try and pick only the ones with good quality for printing. A good print needs pictures with as many pixels as possible. So that means your cell phone pictures (no matter how perfect they look on the small screen) are a complete no-no for a wall calendar. Stick with digital camera photos which are capable of capturing 3 megapixels or more. Since most calendars present pictures at around 8 by 10 inches, photos taken at a minimum of 1600 by 2000 pixels might be a good thumb rule to go by. But bigger the better is the normal rule, so don't hesitate in using photos shot at even higher resolutions.

