

SUPPORTED WRITING OF CHRISTMAS CARDS

Preparation:

Start in good time. Don't leave it too close to Christmas.
Choose a time when the person isn't too tired.
Have everything to hand.
Don't do too many at once to avoid stress.
Have a Christmas card list saved on a computer for carers to access or a handwritten list in a carers' file.
Make some home-made cards, always well received, supplement these with shop bought ones as necessary.



Writing the cards:

Hand write some of the cards or all of them if you want to.
If handwriting is stressful type a greeting on a computer instead, with a signature.
Repeat this several times on an A4 page. e.g. in a WORD table with grid lines.
Then, just print out the number of copies you think you will need.
You will then have the grid lines to cut along to separate all of the greetings ready to stick these into the cards.
Stick these in the cards to save the stress of writing loads of greetings.

There is an argument for doing some handwriting as it does help to keep the connections between physical movements and brain activity going, strengthening neural pathways.
It also keeps a learnt skill going in a relatively meaningful way.
So, you just have to judge this on the individual and their needs and abilities.



Andrew, Christmas 2020:

Andrew is typing "Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year from"
Next year it might be - "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all from Andrew and Anne."

So, friends and family will get one card from both of us instead of one from each of us.
That seems fine to me.
This cuts down the time spent by half as there are only half the number of cards to write. It is a saving in cost, including postage, and also better for the environment.

Alternatives when writing cards:

Some people write, who the card is to, before the main greeting. If handwriting is difficult this isn't necessary.

Some people write a little personal message on the card. This is nice and people appreciate it, but again may be unachievable for some. Alternatively, type out a message and cut and paste this onto the card.

Personal assistants can also scribe. Ask the person you support what they would like to write but write it for them. Use whatever method of communication or augmented communication is suitable. I also sometimes write down what the person wants to say clearly printing this on a piece of paper so that they can copy it and handwrite it themselves onto the card or type it out.

I also sometimes use dictation or spell out words. I have used plastic letters or word cards, or hand over hand techniques.

Andrew has also sent e cards he has designed, photos of cards he has made or paintings he has done. There are also commercial firms where you can pay and use their ready designed formats to send to people.

You have to find an appropriate method for the person you are working with.

This could include doing something completely different like sending a video message, or a photo with a message by email, What's App etc.



Envelopes:

Finally, you have to have a record of the addresses, or email addresses or telephone numbers, to hand.

A good plan is to have them saved on the person's phone.

For addresses, these could be saved in a WORD table ready to print out in a similar way to the greetings, except once you cut them out, you just stick the addresses on the envelopes.

Some people may have these addresses stored in a database or other programme.

Put the appropriate stamps on at home, making a separate pile for ones that need to be sent abroad or have to be weighed.

Other tips:

Buy books of first and second class stamps, standard size and large size, well in advance to avoid queues.

Choose your time to go to the post office carefully as it gets near Christmas!

Review the list for next year as cards arrive. Adjust the original list as necessary.

Then next year will be better. More organised and less time consuming.

After Christmas, when your Christmas card list is accurate I was taught as a child to use the cards I had received for next year's gift tags by cutting out any nice, useable pictures. You can use pinking shears to create zig zag lines or other scissors which create a decorative effect, or just ordinary scissors. Use regular shapes like rectangles or be more creative. You can punch holes in the cards using a hole punch and thread ribbon, twine or thin decorative thread through the hole so that they are all ready, or just attach them to next year's presents simply with sticky tape.

Benefits:

Expecting people to be involved in activities like these does give some meaning to the process and a sense of connection and responsibility, even if this is just observing, sticking the stamps on or taking the finished cards to be sent.

I also play some Christmas music and have some Christmas snacks or treats ready to make it more fun.