

### 7 Stress-busting Holiday Shortcuts

Get it all done in much less time -- without feeling frazzled.



Promised to bring the perfect dessert to your friend's Christmas dinner party? Determined to impress your Martha Stewart mother-in-law with your culinary skills? Just add some mini candy cane decorations (and perhaps some edible berries) and turn any store-bought baked good into a tasty, playful and seasonally appropriate dessert.

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## Poll

My new year's resolutions are:

- A. Still going strong
- B. A struggle to stick with
- C. A distant memory

# HEALTHY HABITS: HOW-TOS

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Are you freaking over figuring out suitable gifts for a long list of people? Rather than spending hours combing stores, purchase a case of wine or champagne and a box of stylish red bows. Put a bow and gift tag on each bottle, and you'll have 12 dependable, classy presents that will please everyone from your great aunt to your boss.

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In fifth grade you were praised for your penmanship. But, let's face it, the glory days are over, and handwriting has come to feel rather labor-intensive. Ditch paper cards in favor of video holiday cards transmitted over your phone. Download this [free Sincerely Ink app](#) on your smartphone or iPad and send beautiful video holiday cards in the blink of an eye. If you don't have a smartphone or iPad, hop over to [Hallmark.com](#) for a fun variety of e-cards.

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Perhaps you've put on a magnificent holiday party, but you don't have room in your fridge for all the extra food you made. Or maybe you'd like to get a head start on your New Year's resolution to lose weight and want to jettison leftover tempting treats. Be prepared with extra plastic food containers so that at meal's end, you'll be able to quickly pack away leftovers for your guests to bring home.

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First there's scouting the tree, then buying it, hauling it home, setting it up, trimming it and then doing the whole process in reverse. If just the thought of all that work fills you with dread, save time with one of these way-easier alternatives: an artificial tree, a pre-decorated tree or just a very tiny one.

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As if figuring out flattering angles to capture every heartwarming moment isn't enough, ensuring that all of pictures produced by digital cameras are organized and universally viewable may cause yet another holiday headache. For relatives who aren't on Facebook, head over to Picasa.com, where you can organize and share photos over email. Picasa makes it simple to touch up your photos both online and off and integrates well with popular Google products.

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If crumpled paper and uneven edges are the usual results of your wrapping efforts (not to mention your mother's helpful "I know *you* wrapped this one"), simplify things by investing in holiday bags or beautiful boxes. Dress the bag up with a bow and pretty tissue, and recipients (who are mostly concerned with what's inside anyway) will be delighted.

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*Maya Rock is a freelance writer/editor and a young adult novelist based in New York City. She is also a frequent contributor to [Completely You](#), and she blogs regularly at [Maya-Rock.com](#) about her adventures in the city.*

*Also read: [Quick and Stress-free Holiday Shopping](#) and [Stay Healthy When Everyone Else Is Sick](#)*

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