

Tips on creating a winning holiday letter: professor of communication

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John Llewellyn

Love them or hate them, holiday letters will soon be arriving in a mailbox near you. Chances are you may even be preparing to write one of your own. But in this age of Twitter, Facebook and text messaging, many people have trouble with the art of letter writing.

That's why John Llewellyn, associate professor of communication at Wake Forest University, came up with the YULE rule for writing a well-crafted, year-in-review letter. He says these four simple steps will help you compose a holiday letter that loved ones will actually enjoy reading.

- You care for these people. Make the love and caring – the spirit of the season – come through in the letter. “We generally send holiday letters to people with whom we have strong connections, so use the opportunity to remind them of the things that really matter in your life,” Llewellyn says.

- Use vivid language to tell your story. Let them “see” the special moments. This is not a drab inventory; it is a catalog of adventures.
- Level with them about the hardships of the past year. While you want to keep the letter upbeat, it’s important to strike a balance between spreading cheer and being sincere. “You’re showing a level of respect and concern for the person by not glossing over adversities, but you want to tell the truth in a way that makes it easy for you to tell, and easy for them to hear,” he says.
- Enough is enough. Two pages of news is plenty. Writing any more than that is likely to overwhelm your readers.

Llewellyn points out that holiday letters can be even more meaningful now that so much of our communication is electronic. “You could dash if off, hit a magic button and send it to 100 people,” he says. “But since you’re choosing to do something more direct and intimate, it just makes sense to take the time to do it right.”

Provided by Wake Forest University

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