



It's the week of Christmas and all through the house, so many of us are frantic, scurrying like a mouse! Well, maybe it's not quite like that at your place, but I'm sure you have a nice little to-do list going, right?

Luckily, this month's newsletter will help you accomplish a few last minute tasks. Worried about how your holiday photos will turn out? Don't miss Danielle Calhoun's holiday photo tips article. Running out of cute, last minute gift ideas to create? Margy shows you how to create a stocking gift card holder and even gives you the pattern to print and use, too!

And then once every gift is opened and the photos printed, your December kits will help you get those memories scrapped! All of our kits this month are holiday themed, but of course so many of them work great for winter, masculine or even home décor projects!

Enjoy these last days of December,
Paula



Meet Rhonda {December Guest Designer}

Hi! My name is Rhonda and I live in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. I am blessed to be a loving wife to my husband Chuck, and a mom to my two beautiful little boys. I have always been an artistic person, drawing, painting, loving photography, sewing, writing and basically anything that is hands on. I began this wonderful journey called scrapbooking in April of 2009 and I haven't looked back for a moment! I love every single thing about scrapping. For me, the creative process is soothing to my soul.

Currently I am very fortunate to design for Simply Renee, Bella Blvd as an Artista and for Cardabilities which is a sketch challenge blog.

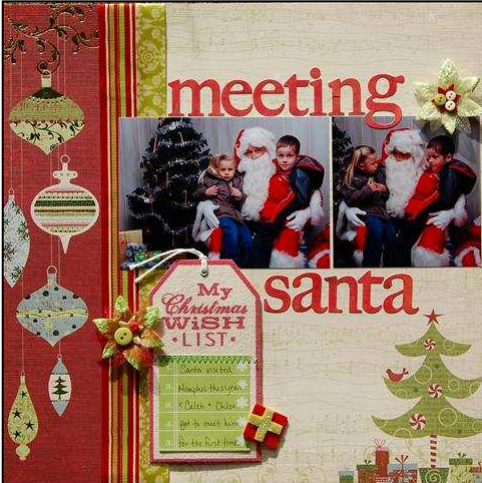
I feel that I'm always learning, growing and evolving as a designer. Fortunately, my boys, Chuck and our little dogs are a *constant* source of fun photos and inspiration 24/7! What's my style? Classic with a twist and always evolving! I adore anything that embraces imperfection and creates comfortable whimsy.



I'm **so** very honored and excited to be a Guest Designer for Back Porch Memories!

Layouts in 15 Minutes {or Less}

by Deb Harter

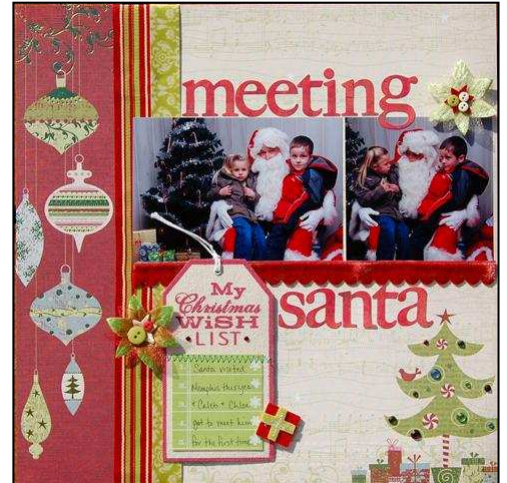


10 Minutes

For this page, I started with the Christmas Tree paper as my base. I cut a 2 inch strip of the ornament paper and adhered that to the left side of the page. I cut two matching ribbons and I layered them next to the ornament paper. I adhered my photos (sizes approx. 3 1/2 x 5" and 3 1/2 x 3 1/2"). I positioned my title above and below the pictures and placed my journaling tag under the first photo. I embellished the page with the two flowers and the little felt gift.

15 Minutes

I decided I wanted to add the scallop ribbon trim under my pictures, so I moved the lower portion of my title down to accommodate that. I also decorated the little tree on the bottom right of the page with some bling. This was a super fast and easy page, but with all of the elements in the papers, you can't tell!



Scrapbook Shortcuts {Circle Punch "Snow"}

by Alissa Trowbridge



I love my circle punches! Even though I own several tools and machines that can cut circles, there's just something about being able to grab from my various sized circle punches and quickly punch out what I want.

If you don't own a variety of circle punches or have yours hidden away someplace inaccessible, I encourage you to add to your punch collection or dust them off! I own a set in graduating sizes starting at 1/2" through 2", going up 1/4" between each size. Although I added them to my collection over time, there's not one I don't use. I've also recently made room for them all to be stored closer to my main work desk, as I find I reach for them again and again.

On this gift tag, I punched a handful of 1" sized circles from a very small piece of leftover patterned paper. In fact, I had so little of it left that some of my circles weren't even fully cut. I then arranged them on the bottom of my tag, overlapping some, hiding the ones that weren't fully cut under others, and letting the edges hang off. I then trimmed off the ones hanging off and finished decorating my tag. The result is a fun, layered "snow" look at the bottom of my tag that literally took me two minutes! Would this technique be cute on a layout?

{December Sketch}
selected from www.pagemaps.com



December Sketch



Danielle Price



Michelle Swartzinski



Margy (Guest Artist)



February Guest Designer Search

The search is on for our February Guest Designer! Are you interested? Check out the details on our message board, under our “contests” heading. Here you’ll find the full rules of our search, a look at the sketch and a place to ask any questions you may have.

Our contest is open to anyone, as long as they haven’t been a guest designer for us in the last six months. So, what do you have to lose? Get out your favorite papers, those great photos you’ve been meaning to scrap away, and get going!

We can’t wait to see your layout! Good luck!

Last Minute Holiday Photo Tips

by Danielle Calhoun

The holidays are always a tough time to take photos for me. The lighting is never good, it gets dark early and most photos are taken indoors. For someone like me that loves taking photos outdoors with natural light, this gives me a challenge to get great photos.

However, all is not lost! You aren't doomed to take bad holiday photos. In fact, there are a few things to keep in mind that will help with the quality of your holiday photos.

Open the Blinds

Let the light in! Though there is a lack of natural light during the winter when many days can be overcast, rainy, or cloudy, remember to keep the blinds open. Let in as much natural light as you can. When your drapes are open, keep in mind you don't want to shoot into the window, rather have your back to the window and let the light come in behind you, towards your subject(s).

ISO – Turn it Up

Another thing that will help with your lighting is to turn up your ISO. Generally speaking, the higher the ISO, the more grainy your photo can look. It is safe to turn your ISO up to 1000-1200, and create a photo that does not have a grainy look. The best thing to do is play with your number a bit, and see what works for your lighting.

Keep the Flash Off

If at all possible, it is best not to use your flash indoors. Many times, the artificial light will create a very harsh lighting situation.

Off Center the Subject

Off center your main subject. This works very well if you can balance your main subject with something in the background on the other side of the photo. For example, try placing the Christmas tree blurred softly in the background on the other side of your photo. The result will be a photo that both records your main subject, but also the beauty of the tree!

Move in Close

Don't forget to take those close up photos. You want to see expressions. Those Christmas morning expressions can be priceless!

Snap Away!

Take LOTS and lots of photos! This is one of the most important things. Take lots of photos! Take 5 of one scene. Your chances of getting that "perfect" photo that you love is so much greater when you keep that shutter working!

Practice Makes Perfect

If you're worried about remembering all of these tips and tricks, practice them a little before your main events and parties. The more you're comfortable with your camera, the better your photos will be. These hints will also be a little more intuitive on the big day, helping to be sure your photos turn out better than ever!

I hope these tips help rescue you from bad photos this season!

Tool Review {Cuttlebug Machine}

by Michelle Swartzinski



← My favorite folder – polka dots!

I recently bought a Cuttlebug machine. I am in LOVE with this new toy! I have already added 8 embossing folders to my collection and am pretty sure I will be collecting many more. They are such an easy way to add a little detail to titles, border strips, cards and more.

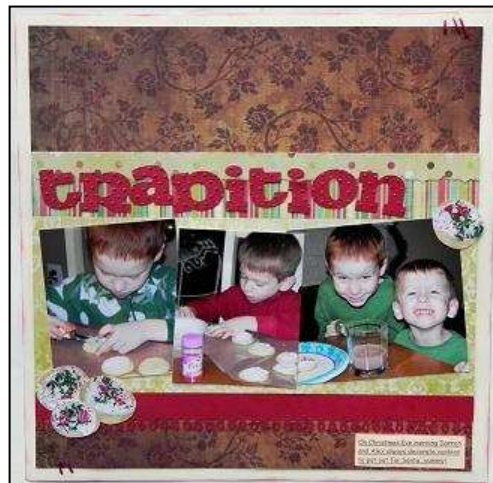
Product Details (from the Cricut website):

Cut a shape, emboss a shape, or cut then emboss shapes with the inspired designs available exclusively with Cuttlebug® cutting and embossing dies. Expressing your creativity has never been easier!

Features:

- Cuttlebug accepts the dies you already own.
- Cuttlebug loves the materials you love, freeing you to cut and emboss from a wide range of crafting materials.
- Compact fold-n-store profile allows storage in less space than other leading machines.
- With a built-in pop-up handle, Cuttlebug goes wherever you find inspiration.

I created this layout using the December Medley kit...the title was made using my Gypsy machine (Don Juan font) and my Cuttlebug Polka Dots embossing folder.



Be sure to check the gallery at Back Porch Memories – I am pretty sure you will see lots of embossed details in my future layouts 😊

Snowflake Mini Album

by Danielle Price

This is an album of my youngest with his cousin. I could not get them to go back inside that day. They were both loving the snow!

The album is made with this month's Solo Kit and a sheer snowflake album by Maya Road. The stickers on the front cover are on pop-dots. The ribbon is from my stash. You can see from each photo below the album comes together with a matted photo on each page, accented with embellishments from the kit.



cover



pages 1 and 2



pages 3 and 4



pages 5 and 6



back cover

Christmas Stocking Gift Card/Money Holder {Last Minute Idea!}

by Margy (Guest Artist)

I could kiss whoever invented the gift card. Of course, there's nothing prettier under the Christmas tree than a wrapped package, but sometimes the best way to go is the gift card or cash. Last Christmas I wanted to do something festive and personal for my teenage niece and nephew, yet was reduced to giving cash (which was appreciated more than socks and lip balm). I made these stockings to hold the dough out of scraps, and they even look decent under or on the Christmas tree.



1. Cardstock and heavy patterned paper work best. I used the "Frosty" Crate Paper and kraft cardstock from the December Solo kit. The red cardstock and ribbon are scraps, and I used Tattered Angels Chalkboard Glimmer Mist on the stocking cuff.
2. Assemble the insert and pocket first, then decorate the front of the stocking. Sew or glue the ribbon hanger to the inside back of the stocking.

3. Sandwich the insert between the front and back and sew them together being careful not to catch the insert in the seam. (I haven't tried this with a line of glue, but I'm sure it would be fine).

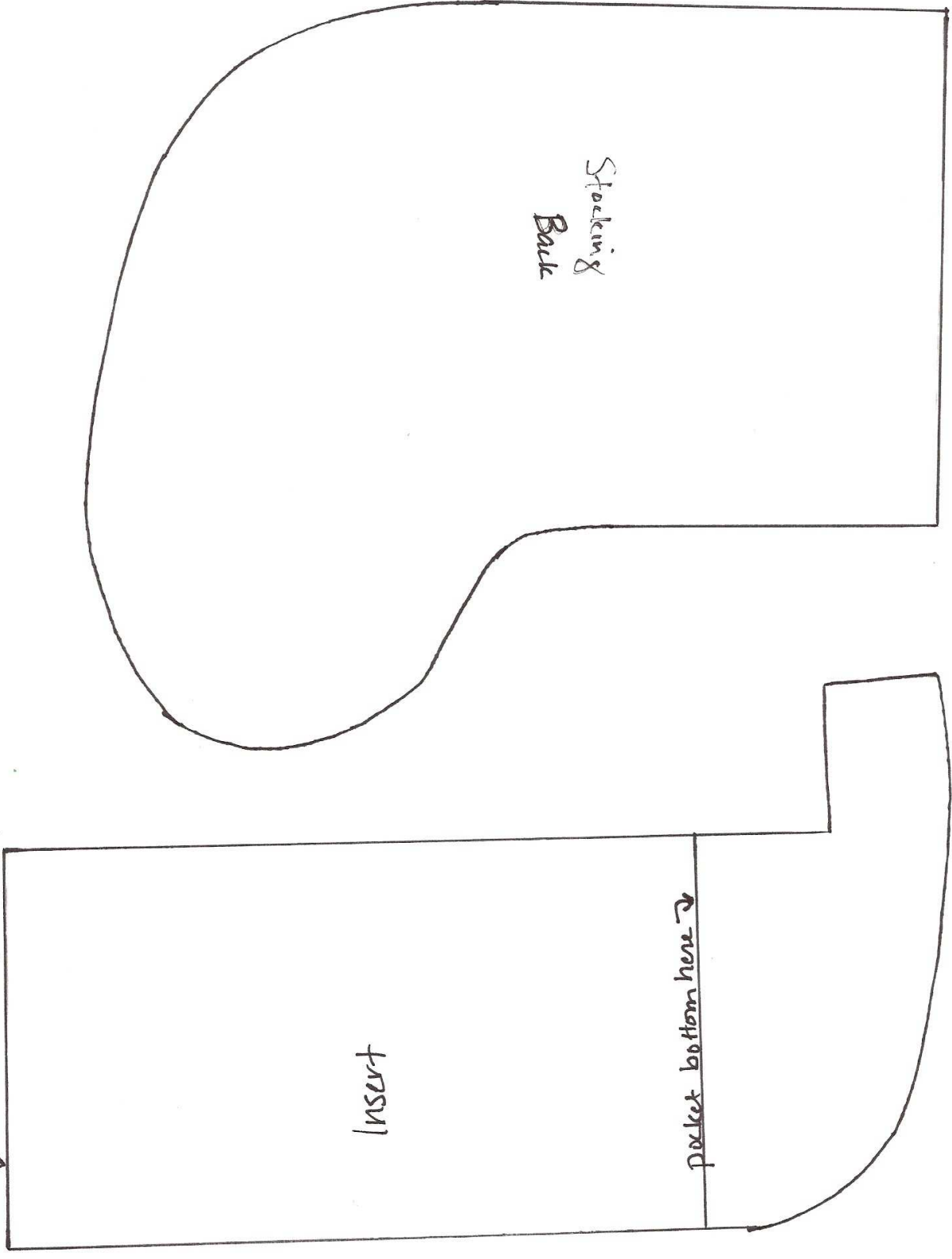


4. The cuff is a 1" strip of cardstock. I rounded the top corners with a punch, sprayed with Glimmer Mist, and sewed a scalloped scrap to the edge. I glued the cuff to the top of the stocking.

The pattern is sized for a gift card, but it can be downsized for folded cash. Wouldn't a Back Porch Memories gift card fit nicely?

Merry Christmas!

Editor's Note: Scroll down to the very next page for the pattern to Margy's gift card holder!



Stocking
Back

Insert

↪ pocket bottom here ↪

↪ punch this edge ↪

