Prep Time: 20 minutes
Chill Time: 4 hours (minimum) to overnight
Total Time: 4 hours 20 minutes
Yield: 12–15 servings
Difficulty: Easy
No baking required

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Ingredients

For the Cream Layers

- 1 (14.4 oz / 408 g) box graham crackers (about 24 full sheets)
- 2 (3.4 oz / 96 g) boxes instant vanilla pudding mix
- 3 cups (720 ml) cold whole milk
- 1 (8 oz / 227 g) tub frozen whipped topping (Cool Whip), thawed

For the Chocolate Topping

- 1 (16 oz / 453 g) container chocolate frosting
- *Optional:* 1 cup (240 ml) heavy cream, for a lighter, whipped chocolate topping

Optional Garnishes

- Chocolate shavings or sprinkles
- Fresh strawberries or raspberries

- A dusting of cocoa powder

Equipment Needed

- 9×13-inch (23×33 cm) glass baking dish
- Large mixing bowl
- Whisk or electric hand mixer
- Spatula
- Measuring cups

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Prepare the Pudding Layer (5 minutes, low intensity)

In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the two boxes of instant vanilla pudding and 3 cups of cold whole milk. Whisk vigorously for about 2 minutes, until the mixture begins to thicken. Let it rest for 5 minutes to set further. Tip: Use cold milk—warm milk prevents the pudding from setting properly.

Step 2: Fold in the Whipped Topping (2 minutes, low intensity)

Gently fold the thawed whipped topping into the pudding using a spatula. Fold rather than stir—this keeps the mixture airy and light. Stop as soon as no white streaks remain; overmixing deflates the cream.

Step 3: Build the First Layer (3 minutes, low intensity)

Spread a thin, even layer of the pudding mixture (about ½ cup) across the bottom of the 9×13-inch dish. This “anchor layer” prevents the graham crackers from sliding. Then arrange a single layer of whole graham crackers over the pudding, breaking pieces as needed to fill gaps.

Step 4: Alternate Layers (5 minutes, low intensity)

Spread half of the remaining pudding mixture over the graham crackers. Add a second layer of graham crackers, then the rest of the pudding, and finish with a third layer of graham crackers. You should have three cracker layers and two cream layers. Press down gently with a spatula to compact the layers slightly.

Step 5: Add the Chocolate Topping (5 minutes, medium intensity)

Simple method: Remove the lid and foil seal from the frosting container. Microwave in 15-second intervals (about 30–45 seconds total), stirring between each, until pourable but not hot. Pour over the top graham cracker layer and spread evenly with a spatula.

Whipped method (lighter texture): Whip 1 cup of cold heavy cream to soft peaks, then fold in the chocolate frosting until smooth. Spread over the top layer.

Step 6: Chill (4 hours to overnight, no active work)

Cover the dish with plastic wrap or a lid and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, ideally overnight.

This resting period is essential—it softens the graham crackers into a cake-like texture and allows the flavors to meld. Do not skip this step.

Step 7: Serve and Garnish (2 minutes, low intensity)

Slice into squares with a sharp knife, wiping the blade between cuts for clean edges. Garnish with chocolate shavings, berries, or a light dusting of cocoa powder if desired.

Time & Intensity Summary

Stage	Time	Intensity
Pudding preparation	5 min	Low
Folding whipped topping	2 min	Low
Layering	8 min	Low
Chocolate topping	5 min	Medium
Chilling	4+ hours	None (passive)
Serving	2 min	Low

Total active time: ~20 minutes | Total time: 4+ hours

Make-Ahead & Storage

- Make ahead: Prepare up to 24 hours in advance; flavor improves overnight.
- Refrigerator: Store covered for up to 4 days.

- Freezer: Freeze slices individually wrapped for up to 2 months; thaw overnight in the refrigerator.

- Not recommended: Room-temperature storage—the dairy layers require refrigeration.

Tips for Success

1. Use whole milk. Lower-fat milk produces a thinner, less stable pudding layer.

2. Don’t overbeat the pudding. Stop whisking once it thickens; excessive beating makes it gluey.

3. Break crackers to fit. Small pieces in the corners keep layers even.

4. Chill long enough. Four hours is the minimum; overnight is best for that true “éclair” texture.

5. Wipe your knife. Clean cuts make for a prettier presentation.

Nutrition Information (per serving, based on 12 servings)

Values are estimates and will vary with specific brands and portion sizes.

Nutrient	Amount per Serving
Calories	~380 kcal
Total Fat	~15 g
Saturated Fat	~8 g
Cholesterol	~5 mg
Sodium	~370 mg
Total Carbohydrates	~57 g
Dietary Fiber	~1 g
Total Sugars	~38 g
Protein	~3 g