





## **CHRISTMAS FUN**

Let's start out exploring some fun things that you can do to help bring the Christmas spirit to your home.

### **1. Shop**

What's Christmas without shopping? Whether you're an avid shopper, or you just get out this time of year, shopping is inevitable. Remember to check the sales, and shop around for great deals. For those who absolutely hate shopping, let your fingers do the shopping! Find thousands of deals in online stores as well.

### **2. Wrapping Gifts**

Whatever gifts you buy, you're going to have to wrap. There are many different creative, fun and dazzling ways to wrap presents. Just remember that there's no wrong way to wrap. Here are some creative things to try:

- Use small tree decorations instead of bows.
- Use decorative bags with tissue paper.
- Use lots of ribbons and bows.
- Use Christmas sales sheets for wrapping paper.

### **3. Decorate**

Whether you decorate the day after Thanksgiving or wait until a week before Christmas, decorating is a big part of the season. Make sure you choose what's best for you and your family. Here are some popular favorites.

- Tree
- Wreaths
- Ribbons
- Lights
- Candles

### **4. Trim the Tree**

Decorating the tree is always fun (after untangling the lights, of course). Make sure you have your own traditions. Here are some ideas:

- Have a special tree topper.
- Hang homemade decorations.
- Talk about special ornaments as you hang them.
- Don't worry about it looking perfect. There's no wrong way to decorate a tree.

### **5. Christmas Cards**

Christmas is a wonderful way to get in touch with loved ones. There are so many ways that you can do this. Here are a few ideas:

- Traditional store-bought cards
- Home made cards
- Have a family picture on a holiday postcard
- Write a family letter and print it out on holiday paper.

## **6. Caroling**

Going Christmas caroling is a great thing to do during the holidays. Whether it's with your family, neighbors or church group, singing songs together is a great way to invite the Christmas spirit. Some people even dress up in old-fashioned clothes to make it an even more memorable occasion.

## **7. Santa Claus**

What's Christmas without the big guy? Many families (especially those with small children) incorporate Santa into their celebrations. Whether it's visiting him at the mall, writing him letters, or leaving milk and cookies for him, Santa Claus will always bring magic to the holidays.

## **8. Crafts**

Making crafts at Christmastime is super fun! Just get out the paper, glue, craft sticks and you're on your way! Here are some things you can make:

- Craft stick stars
- Santa Claus (make his beard with cotton balls)
- Snowflakes
- Snowmen

## **9. Advent**

Counting down the days until Christmas can be fun, especially for children. Whether you make a simple paper chain, mark off the days on a wall calendar, or have a fancy calendar, don't forget to bring it out on December 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **10. Twelve Days of Christmas**

A great Christmas tradition is to do the twelve days of Christmas. Just decide on a family or co-worker that you'd like to surprise, and start gathering fun things to secretly give them. Then on December 13<sup>th</sup>, secretly leave a little gift with a note that says, "On the first day of Christmas my good friends gave to me..." then write the name of your gift. Do this every day until the twelfth day, which is Christmas eve. You can reveal yourself on this day if you want to.

## **11. Christmas Quilt**

Many people like to make a Christmas quilt each year. It's great at bringing family together. Just take some memorable material (a favorite sweater, an old tree skirt, retired stockings), and set aside some time to quilt them together.

## **12. Charity**

Christmas brings out the giving in everyone. Some choose to give to charities during the season. Here are some good charities to consider:

- Sub for Santa
- Toys for Tots
- Salvation Army
- Local shelters

## **13. Visit Hospitals**

You can never go wrong when you visit hospitals or convalescent homes at Christmastime. Whether you're singing Christmas carols to your elders or making balloon animals for sick kids, selfless acts like these really bring the Christmas spirit.

## **14. Christmas Around the World**

It can be a fun Christmas tradition to *learn* about Christmas traditions throughout the world. Pick a country, set aside some time, and have fun. For example, if you choose to learn about Mexico, here are some suggestions of things that you can do:

- Read Christmas stories from Mexico.
- Make food from Mexico.
- Tell the Christmas story as they do in Mexico.

## **15. Secret Santa**

Secret Santa is a fun Christmas activity to do at work. At the beginning of the Christmas season, co-workers draw names and secretly leave small gifts for each other throughout December. Then, usually at your office Christmas party, everyone reveals himself or herself.



## CHRISTMAS GOODIES

There's nothing like yummy Christmas goodies. Whether you're making them to share, or just to treat your family, goodies are the most scrumptious part of the holidays. This next set of activities is some favorite holiday recipes.

### 16. Gingerbread House

Making gingerbread houses can be fun during the holidays. They're quite easy to make, and they can last for years. If you need a good pattern, go here:

<http://dinnercoop.cs.cmu.edu/dinnercoop/Recipes/karen/GingerbreadHouse.html>.

### 17. Popcorn Balls

Popcorn balls are a favorite at Christmas time, and they're easy to make. All you need is popcorn and caramel. It's also an easy treat to share with friends and family. Here's a good recipe:

1/2 of 14 oz. pkg. vanilla caramels  
1 tbsp. water 2 tsp. butter 7 c.  
popped popcorn

Combine caramels, water and butter in 4 cups liquid measuring cup. Microwave 1 1/2 minutes. Stir until smooth. Cook popcorn in microwave oven then pour melted caramel over popcorn; mix well. Then shape into balls.



## 18. Sugar Cookies

Making sugar cookies at Christmastime is a wonderful way to celebrate. Children, especially, love getting creative with cookie cutters. Here are some things that you can use to decorate them with:

- Frosting
- Colored sugar
- Life Savers
- Candy sprinkles
- Chocolate Kisses

## 19. Eggnog

Eggnog is a favorite Christmas drink. Here's a great recipe: 1 egg 1 c. milk 1 tsp. vanilla Vanilla ice cream (good quality) Sprinkle of sugar Nutmeg

Whip in blender. Sprinkle nutmeg on top.

## 20. Chex Mix

Chex Mix is a great holiday snack that you can eat anytime. It's also a great party snack. Here's the recipe: 6 tbsp. butter 1 tsp. seasoned salt 4 tsp. Worcestershire sauce 2 c. Corn Chex 2 c. Rice Chex 2 c. Wheat Chex 1 1/2 c. Planters mixed nuts 1 c. tiny pretzels or pretzel sticks

Melt butter in shallow pan over low heat. Stir in salt and Worcestershire sauce. Add Chex, nuts, and pretzels. Mix until all pieces are coated. Heat in a 250 degree oven for 45 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes. Spread on paper towels to cool. Serve.

## 21. Fruitcake

Fruitcake has come a long way in the last few years. It can not only be a feast for the tongue but also for the eyes as well. Here's a great recipe: 2 1/2 c. unsifted flour 1 tsp. baking soda 2 eggs, slightly beaten 28 oz. jar ready to use mince meat 14 oz. can sweetened condensed milk 1 lb. mixed candied fruit 1 c. coarsely chopped nuts

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Grease two 9 x 5 inch loaf pans. Combine flour and baking soda, set aside. In large bowl combine remaining ingredients, blend in dry ingredients. Pour half the batter into each prepared pan. Bake 1 hour and 20 to 25 minutes until wooden pick inserted near center comes out clean. Cool 15 minutes. Turn out of pan.

## 22. Candyland Train

This is a Christmas treat that's fun to make, beautiful to look at, and yummy to eat. Here's a recipe: 1 (13x9") baked chocolate cake 2 c. creamy chocolate frosting Licorice (to connect the train cars) Assorted candies, animal cookies and cereal (for decorations)

To cut the cake into cars, first cut the cake in half the long way. Then cut the cake the short way into six equal rows to form 12 rectangles. Cut one of these rectangles in half the short way. Then to make frosting the cake easier, let the cut cake stand for 1 to 2 hours or until the edges are slightly dry.

## 23. Divinity

Divinity is always a rich Christmas temptation. Here's a yummy recipe: 2 1/2 c. sugar 1/2 c. light corn syrup 1/2 c. water 1/4 tsp. salt 2 egg whites 1 tsp. vanilla 1 c. chopped nuts

Mix first 4 ingredients in a 2 quart saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until mixture comes to a boil. Reduce heat; cook without stirring until temperature reaches 265 degrees. Beat egg whites in a large bowl until stiff peaks form when beater is raised. Beating constantly on high speed of electric mixer, slowly pour hot syrup over egg whites. Continue beating until small amount holds soft peaks when dropped from spoon. Mix in vanilla and nuts. Drop by teaspoon onto wax paper.

## 24. Snowballs

Christmas snowballs are not only fun to make, but they're also a yummy treat. Here's a recipe: 1/2 lb. butter 17 heaping tbsp. flour 4 tbsp. granulated sugar 5 tbsp. finely ground walnuts 2 oz. pure vanilla

Blend together butter, sugar and flour. Add enough vanilla to make a soft dough. Pinch dough into small balls the size of a walnut. Bake at 375 degrees for about 12 minutes until golden brown. Do not overbake. Shake in bag with sugar while still hot. After they are completely cool, you may dip into powdered sugar again until they resemble snowballs. Will keep indefinitely.

## 25. Fudge

What's Christmas without rich, creamy fudge? Here's a great recipe: 6 cups sugar 1 1/2 cups butter 1 large can evaporated milk 2 packages chocolate chips 1 jar marshmallow cream 1 cup nuts

Cook in heavy pan until boiling, boil 10 minutes, stirring all constantly. Take off burner and add chips, marshmallow cream, and nuts. Make sure you mix well and pour into 9 x 13 buttered pan. It will make 6 pounds.



The Internet has a lot of Christmas games to play. This next set of activities will lead you to games that you and your children will love.

## INTERNET GAMES

### 26. Dress Up Elves

Here's a great game for kids who like to play dress up. You get to dress up two very cute elves with a variety of festive clothes. Find it here:

<http://akidsheart.com/holidays/christms/dresself.htm>.

### 27. Snowflakes

Everyone loves making paper snowflakes, especially at Christmastime. But now you can make them online by going to <http://snowflakes.lookandfeel.com>. You can even save the ones you like and show them to your friends.

### 28. Decorate the Tree

Now you can let the kids decorate and un-decorate a Christmas tree any time during the season. You can find it here:

<http://akidsheart.com/holidays/christms/decotree.htm>.

### 29. Nativity Scene

This is a really fun game for the kids. They can arrange the Nativity scene as many times as they want. Find it here:

<http://akidsheart.com/holidays/christms/decotree.htm>.

## **30. Stocking Memory Match**

This match game is a great game for young kids. It not only helps get them in the Christmas spirit, but helps with their memory skills. Find it here: <http://akidsheart.com/ws/stocking.htm>.

## **31. Santa Ski Game**

This game is not only fun but hilarious. Guide Santa down the slopes so that he can deliver all of his Christmas presents. Find it here: <http://www.squiglyplayhouse.com/Games/Flash/Gosanta/index.php>.

## **32. Tic Tac Toe**

This game is a new spin on an old favorite. With this tic tac toe game, you get to play against Rudolph. Be careful though. This reindeer can be very tricky! Find it here: <http://www.blackdog.net/holiday/christmas/tictactoe2>.

## **33. Build a Snowman**

Now your kids can build a snowman even if there's no snow outside. They can pick Frosty's face, hat and scarf. Find it here: <http://akidsheart.com/holidays/christms/snowman.htm>.

## **34. Holiday Jigsaw Puzzle**

Here's a puzzle that's great for all ages. It's simple enough for children, yet adults will have fun putting it together as well. Find it here: [http://freejigsawpuzzles.com/beta/old\\_santa.htm](http://freejigsawpuzzles.com/beta/old_santa.htm).



Having a party this holiday? This next set of tips will give you lots of Christmas party game ideas that will entertain you and your guests.

## **PARTY GAMES**

### **35. White Elephant**

A great party game is to have everyone bring a wrapped silly gag gift. There are several ways to play, but one way is to put all the gifts in the middle of the room. Each person chooses and unwraps a gift. As each gift is unwrapped, the person can decide whether to keep the gift or trade it for one that's already been unwrapped. This is fun because everyone ends up with a different gift than they started with.

### **36. Wrapping Game**

This is a great game for parties. Get some uniform boxes (tissue boxes work well), wrapping paper, and a stopwatch. Have two or three guests at a time compete at wrapping the tissue boxes in one minute. Give awards for speed, accuracy and beauty.

### **37. Gift Unwrap**

This game is a lot like the wrapping game, but of course your guests compete at unwrapping gifts. Sound too easy? Make sure that your gifts are wrapped tightly and that your guests are wearing...mittens! The thicker, the better!

## **38. Stocking Guessing Game**

This is a great party game. Get an oversized Christmas stocking and fill it with ordinary, every day items. Give your guests a pen and paper, and they have thirty seconds to feel around inside the stocking. Have them write down as many items as they can. The person with the most correct items wins.

## **39. Christmas Carol Pictionary**

Revisit a classic! Write as many Christmas carols as you can think of on individual slips of paper. Divide your guests into teams, and give each team a pad and paper. (This can also work using a large white board.) Then have someone from the first team pick a slip of paper, and give them thirty seconds on the clock. They try to draw the Christmas carol before time runs out.





## **KIDS PARTY GAMES**

Are you throwing a children's Christmas party? This next set of activities will give you lots of game ideas that will keep kids busy and happy.

### **40. Candy Cane Relay**

Candy cane relay is a great game for the kids. Divide them up into two to four lines and give each line a candy cane. When you say go, each team must pass the candy cane down their line using only their forefinger and middle finger. The fastest team to do this without breaking the candy cane wins.

### **41. Pass the Ornament**

Pass the ornament is an amusing game that will keep kids giggling. Cut out some ornaments out of tissue paper (stars, trees, bells). Divide the kids into separate relay lines and give each child a straw. Pass the tissue paper ornaments down the line by sucking them with the straw.

### **42. Rudolph Race**

This is a great game to get out the camera for. Divide the kids into two lines. Have a red dot for each child, and stick it on their nose with Vaseline. When you say go, each child must run to the finish line with their red dot on their nose. If it falls off, they must go back, apply more Vaseline, and start over.

### **43. Fill the Stocking**

This is a great game for kids with lots of energy. Have the kids line up in two lines at one end of the room. At the other end, hang a Christmas stocking for each team. Place a bowl of candy and an oversized spoon in front of each team. Each child takes a turn carrying as much candy as they can fit on the spoon to the stocking. The first team to fill the stocking wins.

### **44. Three-Legged Stocking Race**

This is a great outdoor Christmas game for kids. It's played like the traditional three legged race, but instead of tying two kids' legs together, you have them each put a foot in an oversized Christmas stocking and race to the finish line.

### **45. Christmas Candles**

All kids love blowing out birthday candles, so the Christmas candles game is especially fun. Clear off a coffee table or kitchen table and put four to ten lit Christmas candles on it (with adult supervision of course). Blindfold each child and give them ten seconds to blow out as many candles as they can.



# **CHRISTMAS EVE TRADITIONS**

A big part of Christmas is Christmas Eve. Most families have their own traditions that they enjoy. For those just starting Christmas traditions, here are a few ideas:

## **46. Read the Christmas Story**

The Christmas story is the greatest story ever told. What better thing to tell on Christmas Eve? There are many ways to enjoy the story. Here are a few ideas:

- Read Luke 2 in the Bible as a family.
- Act it out.
- For smaller children, Christmas pop-up books or board books are great.
- Use your own Nativity set to tell the story.
- Have kids draw the story on a white board.

## **47. Open One Present**

This is a tradition that kids love. Opening one gift on Christmas Eve not only makes them happy, but it also gives them a toy to play with while waiting for bedtime.

## **48. Talk About Christmas Symbols**

Christmas Eve is a great time to talk about the Christmas symbols and what they mean. Here's a partial list:

- Bell – The bells worn by the cows in the stable
- Candy Canes – The staffs held by the shepherds
- Tree – Everlasting life
- Star – The new star that led the wisemen to Bethlehem

## **49. Put Out Cookies and Milk**

Don't forget to put out cookies and milk for Santa! You can also help your kids write a quick note to Santa as well. It's great to have Santa write the kids a reply note thanking them for the cookies.

## **50. Attend Church**

No matter what denomination you belong to, it's always a great thing to attend church on Christmas Eve. Whether it's a Christmas devotional, or beautiful Christmas music, this can really remind you of the true meaning of Christmas.

## **51. Christmas Dinner**

Having a yummy Christmas dinner on Christmas Eve is a great way to bring family together. If you need ideas or recipes, visit <http://www.christmas-joy.com/recipes/> .