



Christmas Family Traditions Your Family Will Love

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For adults and kids alike, Christmas is the most magical time of the year! Many families already have traditional or ethnic traditions and customs in place that were handed down for generations. But why not begin new traditions in addition to those already in place, to make the holiday even more special for your little learner at home?



Make the season even brighter for your child and explore the following memory-making family Christmas traditions:

Make Reindeer Food

Making reindeer food is a fun Christmas Eve tradition you can easily start with your kids! Just like leaving out cookies and milk before bed, sprinkling reindeer food outside is a cute way to prepare for Santa's arrival! Earlier on Christmas Eve, enlist your child in the making of the food.

All you need is dry oats used for oatmeal, and red/green sprinkles or sugar crystals. Simply mix about 1 cup of the dry oats with a few teaspoons of sprinkles or sugar

crystals, and collect the reindeer food in a plastic bag. On the evening before Christmas, head outside and help your child sprinkle the reindeer food out onto the lawn!

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Christmas Movie Marathon in Matching Family PJ's

Here's a Christmas tradition that is flexible and can be done all season long! Choose a favorite family movie, or a collection of movies, to watch each and every year. Your family can sit down together to watch the movie after Thanksgiving, each weekend, or even just on Christmas Eve. Feel free to customize when you would like this event to occur, and how often you would like to watch!



On your holiday family movie night, wear your matching family pajamas (available in most department stores or online) and make the whole family hot cocoa and popcorn. Sit down to watch favorite classics, like *A Christmas Story* or *Home Alone*. For younger children, choose classics like *Polar Express* or *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

The Giving Elf

By now, most parents have heard of or have an Elf on the Shelf for their children. A relatively new phenomenon that involves one of Santa's elves spending each day in your home watching the kids, this Christmas tradition is already wildly popular. Why not make your elf even more special by incorporating a new tradition to go along with it?

Before your elf arrives, or if it's already too late for this season, before Santa comes, hide your elf right on top of the Christmas tree. Below, place an empty basket or box with a note that says something similar to, "Please give to receive." Help your child pick out toys that are no longer used to place in the basket. Together take the toys to a local homeless shelter, or to any location with a Toys for Tots drop box. Local campaigns can be found using the organization's website, or simply head to your church to find a charity that will take gently used toys. Not only will you instill valuable lessons to develop a giving character, your child will feel proud of his or her donation, and feel that Santa's gifts were truly earned.

Reverse Advent Calendar

Advent calendars are a fun way of counting down to Christmas day. When it comes to Christmas traditions to start with your kids, it's also important to celebrate the true reason for the season by giving to others. Instead of using a traditional advent calendar that involves your child taking something out of a container, make a new tradition that involves your child giving something to put in to a container to give to others.



With your child, create a large box and form sections or slots to place things inside, and number them off for the days you are counting down to Christmas. In each slot, put something inside that others may need. This can be nonperishable food items, like dry pasta or canned goods, or pieces of clothing for kids or babies. For each day, select something to put in the box, and before Christmas, head to your church, homeless shelter, or food bank to donate the items!

Book Advent Calendar

Advent calendars can be done in many different ways! If your child is already engaged in a gift-giving charity this season, try this idea instead! Based upon how many days you would like to count down, select and wrap books for your child to read this holiday season. These can be any books your child would like, but choosing Christmas-themed books might make this tradition even more special! Wrap each book like a gift, and for each day as you count down, have your child choose a book to unwrap.

Whichever book is unwrapped will be read on that evening, leading up to the final book on Christmas Eve! If you would like, try to remember or make a system so that you know which books are wrapped in each package. That way, your child will read an exciting and festive book the night before Christmas before Santa arrives!

Annual Christmas Ornament Giving

You might not think too much about it now, but one day, your little learner will be all grown up! Often, when adult children leave the home and establish their own, they do not have many meaningful ornaments to hang on their tree. Begin a tradition of making or giving an ornament each year to hang on the tree, so that when he or she eventually leaves the house, they have years of keepsake memories to hang on their new tree!



Get your kids in on the excitement and encourage kids to create ornaments together with the family when they're young. Try to make ornaments that are sturdy or unlikely to break, so salt dough ornaments might not be the best option. Instead, buy ornaments and paint them, or make them from craft sticks using pictures, or use plastic or clay. As your child gets older, feel free to transition from making ornaments to picking one out at the store as they advance through their teenage years and beyond. Ultimately, your child will end up with years' worth of ornaments to decorate their own tree down the road!

Explore Traditions Found Across the World!

Family Christmas traditions don't have to be only those that stem from your own ethnic culture. While those are great, teach your child about cultures found across the globe by studying worldwide Christmas traditions.

Each Christmas, decide upon a culture you and your family would like to explore. For instance, for one year, you may study popular Christmas traditions in Mexico. For another, explore the traditions found in Germany, the Philippines, or Japan. For each cultural celebration, research and cook traditional food and come together as a family to appreciate the culture. This can be done in the days leading up to Christmas, so don't worry about replacing your traditional meal or festivities.

Bake a Birthday Cake... for Jesus!



With all the excitement of the season, sometimes it's easy to forget that Christmas is primarily a religious holiday, that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. Don't let your child forget Jesus' big day, and wake up early on Christmas morning to bake a birthday cake after opening the presents! Plan ahead of time to select your family's favorite cake flavor and decorations, and don't forget to celebrate by sharing cake around the table after Christmas dinner.

Plan a Trip to the Tree Farm

One easy Christmas tradition to start with your kids would be to visit a tree farm to pick —and cut down—your very own family tree. Even if you already have a tree for this season, keep this in mind for next year, or even pick out a second, smaller tree to

decorate another room in your home! Look up your local tree farms available in your area, and plan a trip together to pick out the perfect tree. In addition, many farms offer fun activities, like hay or sleigh rides, Santa visits or other family-friendly activities! More likely than not, your family will enjoy much more than simply cutting down a tree!

Holiday Light Viewing

During the Christmas season, holiday lights are on full display, with grand showcases available throughout each city in the US! Check out your local holiday light viewings, and head out together as a family to view the lights. Oftentimes these displays may be offered by homeowners, and are often put on display by cities or counties.



Most suburban areas and cities host various light displays that often offer other kid-friendly activities like sledding, tobogganing, ice skating, or just a large location to walk around and enjoy the sights! Use social media to find out what's available in your area, and if nothing more, hop in the car and drive through surrounding neighborhoods just to stop and see the lights!

Family Christmas traditions are an important part of each holiday season. Make this season, and every Christmas season even more special for your family by creating new traditions to share with your kids. Use an idea or two above to get started, and make this Christmas one to remember! And don't forget that in between all the excitement and

holiday fun, Kids Academy is here with quality learning resources to keep your child on track during the long winter break!

