

Ideas for new Christmas Family Traditions

Christmas traditions with children are so essential to building a strong family. When you have traditions that last year in year out it build up a sense of bonding, of belonging, it heightens the feeling of suspense and the feeling of anticipation. Most families have Christmas traditions, some they may not even realise they have! We have decided to give you a few ideas for additional family traditions to enjoy year after year.



Baking and Fun Food Traditions

- Bake a large amount of cookies and invite family and friends to come over and decorate them. People have such a good time at events like this and look forward to them every year until, not only is it a tradition for your family but it also becomes an extended tradition for all of your guests year after year.
- Have a Christmas chocolate fondue with lots of different fruits. This is a fun event that all the family will enjoy!

Keepsakes and Memory Makers

- We try and make one Christmas tree ornament each year. It is very easy to make the salt dough for this activity and there are a lot of different recipes for it online.



- We buy a Christmas decoration for each member of the family each year and write their name, the year and the place where we are celebrating Christmas. When the children leave home eventually they will have a collection of memories to bring with them to start their new lives.
- Children take turns on alternating years recording a one page letter of family highlights/challenges they have experienced attaching this in a Xmas card which we then read together on Christmas day. These cards are kept after Christmas in a special box and your family history will be recorded and kept in this box, including births, marriages, deaths, successes, new homes, new career paths, overseas adventures etc
- Make a giant Christmas carols book and take it out every year for a family sing along.

- Choose one family member to act like a TV talk show host. Get them to interview the other family members and make a video recording of the interview. Watch previous years videos in the following year and enjoy watching how much family members have changed during the year.

Some possible questions to ask family and/or friends include:

- ❖ *Full name and age of the person being interviewed*
 - ❖ *Describe a “typical” Christmas day.*
 - ❖ *What is your favourite Christmas carol? Why does this carol appeal to you?*
 - ❖ *What Christmas foods do you really enjoy?*
 - ❖ *Do you have a favourite Christmas recipe that you like to prepare or cook? (If possible, try and obtain a hand written copy of the recipe from the person you are interviewing.)*
 - ❖ *What is your favourite Christmas story or book? Can you tell us a little bit about it and why it is special to you?*
 - ❖ *Do you have a favourite Christmas decoration?*
 - ❖ *What is on your Christmas wish list this year?*
 - ❖ *What is your most treasured Christmas memory of all time?*
 - ❖ *What has been the most special gift you have ever given and/or received?*
- All the family get dressed into their pyjamas and then get into the car and drive around the city to look at the Christmas lights. Make sure to bring cookies and hot chocolate to enjoy on the journey!
 - Have a Christmas diary, write a short summary of the year, what all the family members are doing for Christmas and everyone’s hopes for the New Year!

Acts of Kindness

- Choose a couple of your own toys to give to charity. A nice way to spread the love before Christmas and make room for a few new toys.
- Have a family “Secret Santa” where all the names of the family members are written on a piece of paper and put in a container. Each family member takes a name but keeps it secret who they have chosen. They then have to buy a small gift for the family member whose name they chose. Children look forward to this every year, and take it seriously. They usually take their time thinking about and buying something they know that sibling would love.

Advent Traditions

- We have an advent calendar which consists of envelopes. Inside there is a positive quote or affirmation for each child each day. When we read them out we talk about what they mean and how they are relevant to the child who had chosen them.
- In our house we put out the nativity scene but the baby Jesus isn't put in the scene until the night of the 24th December. Everyone is excited waiting for the arrival of Jesus.
- The first night that the tree is decorated and lit, the whole family can use sleeping bags and sleep around it. There is something magical about falling asleep with the tree lights on!
- Make up an ADVENT BASKET full of small breakfast treats for them to open each morning in December. It is such a nice start to the day!
- Have a wrapped holiday story book to open daily. They can be Christmas books from previous years, library books and ones that you have made together over the years. It is lovely unwrapping the book and reading it together before bedtime.

- Make a Frosty the Snowman for the Christmas holidays. Decorate it with cotton wool and have a small sign on his stomach. The sign can be changed every day. It should say “Frosty says today we will... “ Each day a new activity is on the sign e.g. make snowflakes, watch a Christmas film, play a Minute to Win it game etc. Children get very excited checking out Frosty’s sign to see what is planned for the day.
- I do the twelve days of Christmas – starting on the 13th each morning I give them the clue to a hiding place where a small present is hidden. On the first day it is one of something, on the second day two of something (like a pair of socks), up to twelve (a dozen colouring pencils or something like that).

Christmas Eve Traditions

- Christmas Eve light a candle for each loved one in heaven and share a thought or memory of each one.
- Watch The Polar Express with hot chocolate on Christmas Eve.
- Before bed, go out and look for the Christmas star...it’s the brightest one.
- Christmas Eve make a birthday cake for baby Jesus. On Christmas day you can sing happy birthday and eat the cake.
- Set out a ‘flight path’ of tea lights in jam jars for Santa to find his way to your house.
- On Christmas Eve have a Bethlehem dinner. Simple food from the region like pomegranates, olives, salmon, hummus, flatbread, crackers and cheese —It’s a fun tradition that helps remind us of our faith.

Christmas Day Traditions

- We play a game called the Dice Game : you need two dice and a pile of miscellaneous low priced gifts including some scratch off lotto tickets. Rules: throw the number 7 or 11 on the dice and you can open a gift, throw a 5 or a 9 and you can steal someone else's gift, throw doubles and you must trade your gift. After the last gift is open, go around 1 more time. The trades become intense.
- To build up the tension and excitement on Christmas morning, make a rule that no one is allowed in in to the front room/lounge room until they have had breakfast then up to get washed dressed and teeth cleaned then only when you are dressed properly are you allowed to enter together as a family. Children will clearly remember the build up to the morning, the buzz and the excitement.



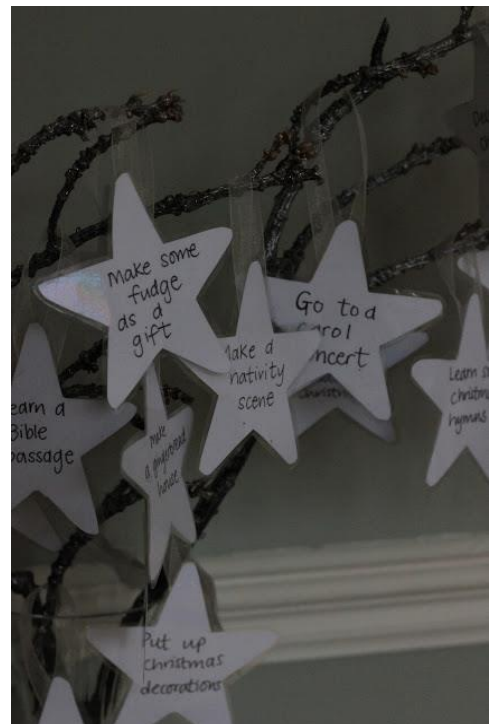
New Family Traditions – Advent Tree

First of all sit and talk about Christmas and what everyone would all like to do. You need to think of 24 ideas – one for each day of December before Christmas Day.



Draw stars on white cardboard, cut them out and write out all of your ideas onto the star shapes. Then stick a loop of ribbon the back of each one with sticky tape.

Paint a tree branch with a tiny bit of silver glitter paint and hang the activity stars onto it, ready to choose one for each day in December.



Here are a few examples of the activities you could do:

- ☐ Make cookies
- ☐ Decorate the tree
- ☐ Make a gingerbread house
- ☐ Create a nativity scene
- ☐ Read a Christmas book
- ☐ Wear Christmas pyjamas around the fire and toast marshmallows
- ☐ Have a movie night with a Christmas film and popcorn
- ☐ Make a holiday greeting video and send it to friends and family
- ☐ Go to a Christmas show
- ☐ Plan a red and green day
- ☐ Have a family game night
- ☐ Make a Christmas tree ornament
- ☐ Design Christmas cards and give them to loved family and friends
- ☐ Make a mason jar snow globe
- ☐ Write a letter to yourself to read in 1 year

....and many more!



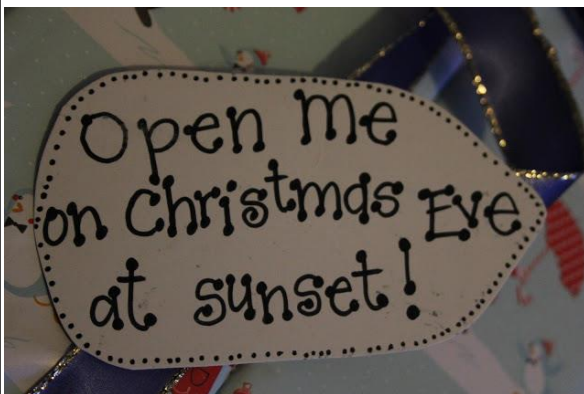
New Family Tradition - Christmas Eve Surprise Box!

CREATE A FUN, MEMORABLE FAMILY TRADITION BY MAKING A **SURPRISE BOX FOR CHRISTMAS EVE** FOR EVERYONE TO SHARE!

Christmas Eve



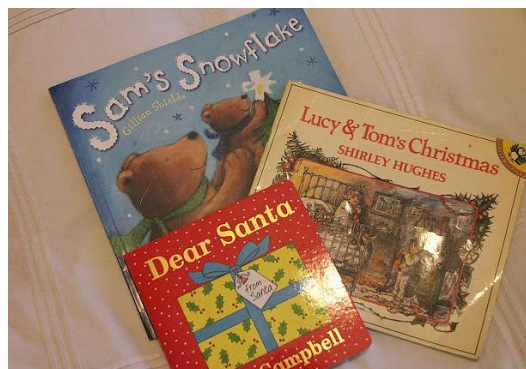
Surprise Box!



Absolutely anything can go into this box, and none of it needs to be new or expensive. You can start putting things away for this all year round. Some contents can be new – others can be from around the house. Everything is exciting when it's wrapped up, whether it's new or not!

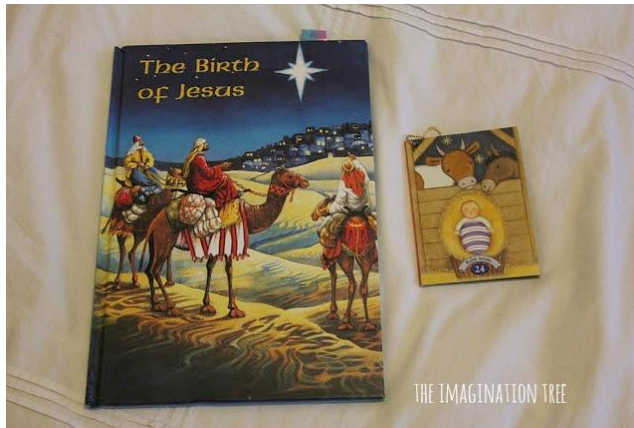


You could include a Christmas movie kit. Put in a new film that you haven't seen before, popcorn, cute little mugs and hot chocolate and marshmallows. Mmmmmmmmm!



Next, there is a pile of books to read together just before bed! It is so evocative of a more simple and treasured childhood, delightfully old-fashioned and focused on all the important

elements of family, childish excitement, gift giving and special traditions. It's great!



And, most importantly of all for our family, include a much cherished book about the birth of Jesus, with beautiful illustrations and a really lovely retelling

of the Biblical account. Read this around the tree, near to the fire and then sing some Christmas hymns.



For the New Year: The Jar Project

Of course, all the big memories are never forgotten, but it's the little joys, the teensy things that tend to get forgotten. This year, start a new tradition to do just one thing – remember the little joys all year long in a memory jar.



Keep a large jar on the kitchen counter with a stack of colourful paper and a marker. Every few days, family members can write down something that made them laugh or smile. On New Year's Eve, you can empty out the jar, unfold each paper and read them out one by one.

Next year, a new jar to begin again — and the best part is you can bring out past jars anytime to remember the little things that shaped our lives.

A memory jar is more fun than a journal – as anyone in the family can contribute to it. It's a family project.

New Family Tradition: Make a Memory Box

Create a memory box full of index cards. Each card is stamped with Month and Day. Every day, write a one or two liner of something that happened that day or a wonderful little memory. The key is to keep going year after year, writing the next year's memory on the next line on the same card. So every day, you'll be able to see what you did each year on that day.

