

How Do We Celebrate Christmas?

Christmas is celebrated in December and is the time when Christians believe that Baby Jesus was born in a stable. How is this festival celebrated in different homes?

Traditions

Do you want to build a snowman? In some parts of the UK, there may be snow to make a snowman with during the Christmas period. Traditionally, snowmen need coal for eyes, a mouth and buttons, a carrot for the nose and a hat and scarf to keep the snowman warm!

At Christmas, many towns and cities decorate their streets with festive lights. During November, these lights are often switched on by famous people with crowds of people watching and cheering.

Dazzling Decorations

Houses and buildings are decorated using lots of decorations at Christmas time. Candles are used as a symbol to represent hope and peace. Many people have an Advent calendar to count down the days until Christmas Day. The first door is opened on the 1st of December. Each door contains a picture and some have a small chocolate or gift inside.

Christmas trees are decorated using tinsel, baubles and lights. The top of the tree usually has an angel or star to remind people about the importance of the birth of Jesus at Christmas time.



Festive Food

Lots of different food is eaten during the Christmas period. Mince

pies are a Christmas treat that are made using pastry and a filling that is mixed with spices. Another tradition is to burn a 'yule log' on the fire during Christmas time. Some homes have now changed this tradition and eat a chocolate cake which is sometimes decorated with holly leaves.



How Do We Celebrate Christmas? Questions

1. Where do Christians believe Baby Jesus was born?

2. What is traditionally used to make the eyes for a snowman?

3. In which month of the year are Christmas lights switched on in towns?

4. What do candles represent at Christmas time?

5. When is the first door opened on an Advent calendar?

6. What is put on the top of a Christmas tree?

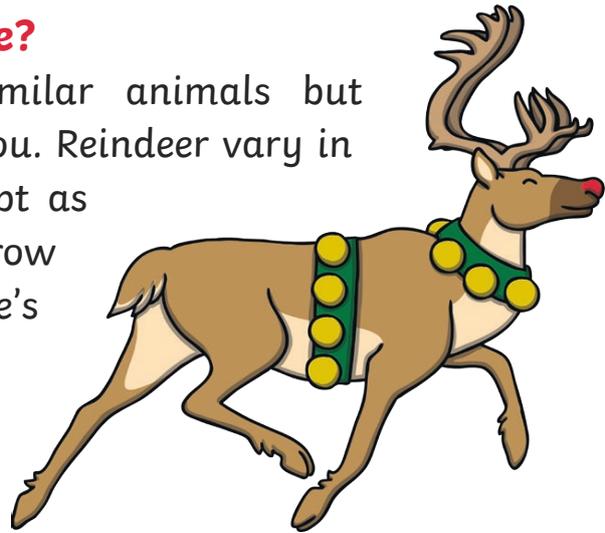
7. What does the decoration at the top of the tree represent?

8. What would you like for Christmas?

Reindeer

What Do Reindeer Look Like?

Reindeer and caribou are similar animals but reindeer are smaller than caribou. Reindeer vary in colour and size and can be kept as pets. Both males and females grow antlers every year, but the male's are usually bigger.



What Do They Eat?

Reindeer eat some types of lichens (a slow-growing plant), leaves and grass. Some also eat mushrooms and fish.

Where Do They Live?

Many wild reindeer can be found in Norway, Finland, Alaska, Canada and Greenland. They like to shelter in forests during winter.

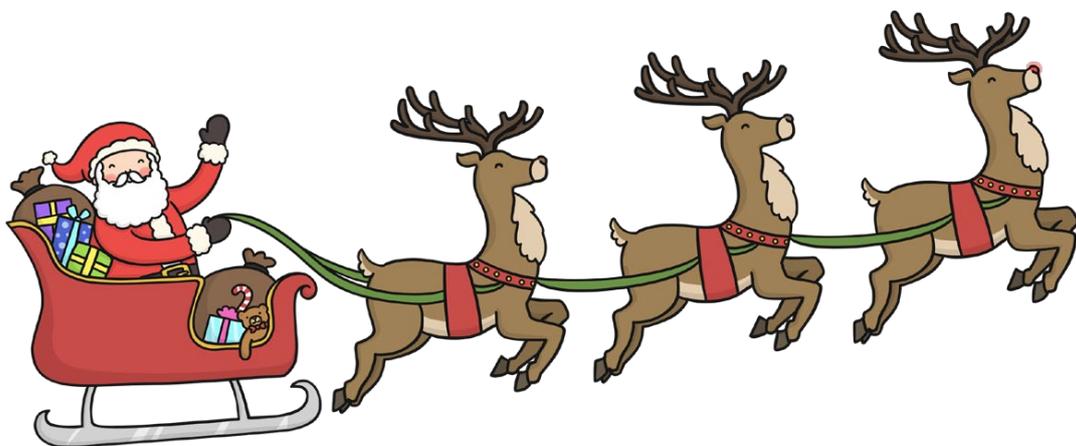
Fun Facts

- Their footpads shrink and tighten in the winter.
- They are very good swimmers.
- They have a great sense of smell.
- Male reindeer are called bulls, females are called cows and babies are called calves.

Reindeer

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer Song

Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer,
Had a very shiny nose.
And if you ever saw it,
You would even say it glows.
All of the other reindeer,
Used to laugh and call him names.
They never let poor Rudolph,
Join in any reindeer games.
Then one foggy Christmas Eve,
Santa came to say:
“Rudolph with your nose so bright,
Won't you guide my sleigh tonight?”
Then all the reindeer loved him,
As they shouted out with glee.
Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer,
You'll go down in history!



Reindeer Questions

1. Which is bigger - reindeer or caribou?

2. What do both male and female reindeer grow?

3. Name three places in the world you might find wild reindeer.

4. Describe what reindeer noses do that is special.

5. Write the first two lines of the song about Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer.

6. What is your favourite reindeer fact?

Saint Nicholas

Who was Saint Nicholas?

Saint Nicholas lived around 1,700 years ago in part of Turkey. He grew up living with his parents and showed his generosity from a young age. When he was bought a gift, Saint Nicholas would share it with his friends. He loved giving presents and therefore it was no surprise that he decided to become a bishop where he could help people by spreading the word of God.

Patron Saints

- A patron saint is someone who watches over and represents a place, person or activity.
- Saints often became patron saints of the place where they were born.
- There are many countries around the world who have a patron saint. In England, the patron saint is Saint George and in Wales it is Saint David. In Scotland, they have Saint Andrew as their patron saint and in Ireland it is Saint Patrick.

One of the most popular stories about Saint Nicholas is when he helped a poor man who did not have enough money for his three daughters to get married. During the night, Nicholas secretly threw a bag of gold through the man's open window while the man slept. It landed in the eldest daughter's stocking that was drying by the fire. The next morning, the family were amazed and delighted by the gift they had received. Saint Nicholas often carried out his good deeds at night as he was a modest man who did not want any thanks.

Saint Nicholas gave his life to helping others and after he died, he became known as the saint of gift-giving. It is thought that Saint Nicholas now lives in the North Pole and every Christmas Eve, he visits the homes of boys and girls around the world. He brings gifts to children to spread joy and happiness at Christmas.



Saint Nicholas Questions

1. How many years ago did Saint Nicholas live?

2. What is a patron saint?

3. Who is the patron saint of Wales?

4. Which day does Saint Nicholas visit children around the world?

5. What is a 'good deed'?

6. Why was one family 'amazed and delighted'?

7. Finish this sentence: 'Nicholas secretly threw...'

8. Name two good deeds that would make someone happy.

Advent

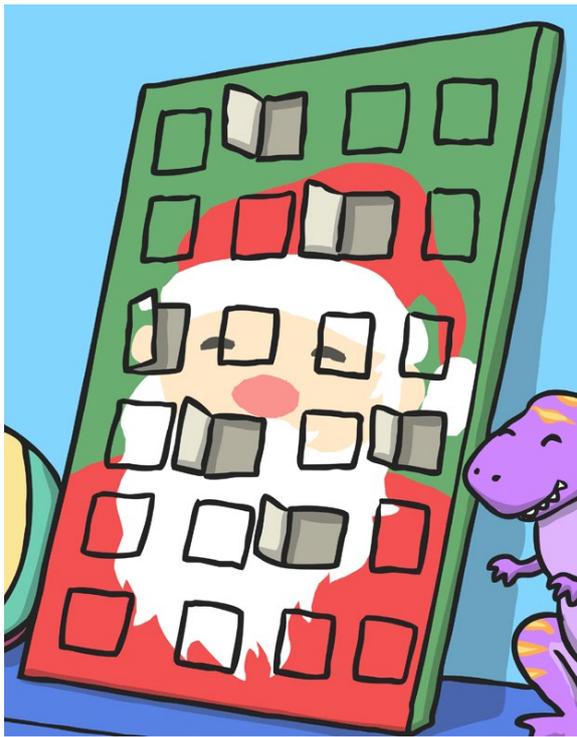
What Is Advent?

Advent is the start of the Christian year, when Christians prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The word 'Advent' means something or someone important is coming. Christians believe Jesus will come again.



When Is Advent?

Advent is the four weeks before Christmas. It starts on the nearest Sunday to November 30th, and lasts until midnight on Christmas Eve.



How Do People Celebrate Advent?

Christians and many other people countdown from 1st December to Christmas Eve using an 'Advent calendar'. Each day a door is opened and a Christmas picture is there, sometimes even with a chocolate treat! Many Christians spend time with family and friends, pray, go to church and sing hymns. They celebrate with Advent crowns, Advent wreaths,

Advent candles, and Christingles. Lots of people also celebrate by singing Christmas carols.

Fun Facts

Each part of the Advent wreath means something special:

- the circle of evergreen branches - God does not change
- the four candles - light of God: Hope, Peace, Love and Joy
- the fifth centre candle lit on Christmas Day - birth of Jesus

Each part of the Christingle means something special:

- a candle - Jesus, light of the world
- cocktail sticks - the four seasons
- an orange - the world
- a red ribbon - Jesus died
- sweets or dried fruit - all of God's creations



Questions

1. What is Advent the start of?

2. What do Christians believe about Jesus?

3. How long does Advent last?

4. What does the circle of evergreen branches mean in the Advent wreath?

5. When is the fifth centre candle lit?

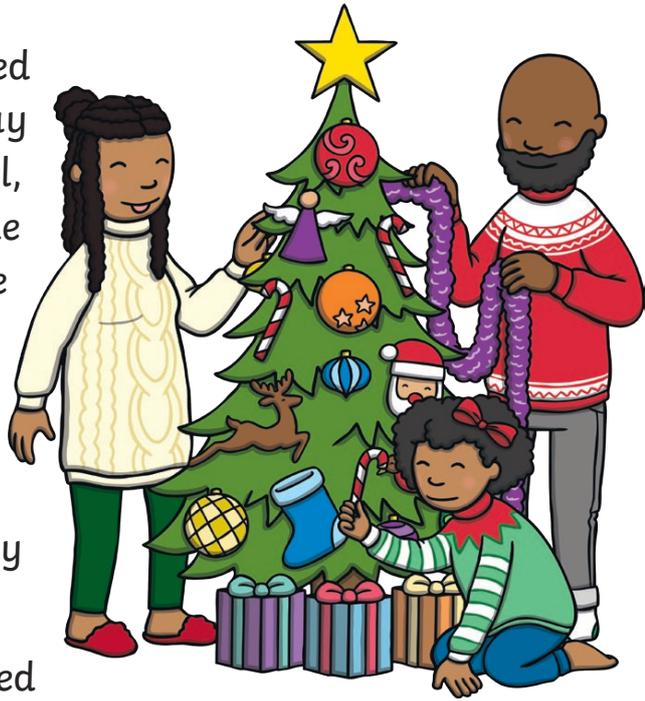
6. What do the cocktail sticks mean on the Christingle?

7. How do your family celebrate Advent?

Christmas Trees

Decorating at Christmas

Christmas trees are decorated ready for Christmas Day with baubles, lights, tinsel, angels and stars. Many people choose to decorate their tree in December, but some do it earlier. Many people have a colour theme for their tree, like red, gold or silver. Christmas presents are usually put under the tree.



A long time ago people used to decorate them with fruit, dough decorations, paper baskets, sweets and candles - very dangerous!

Christmassy Facts!

1. The famous London Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square is a gift from Norway each year.
2. The world's largest floating Christmas tree is in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
3. Prince Albert started the Christmas tree tradition in England in the 1800s.



Different Types of Trees

Christmas trees come in different shapes and sizes. Many people choose real,

evergreen trees to decorate because they can have a woodland smell. Fake trees are called 'artificial' and lots of people choose these because they make less mess and can be used again. There are plastic, pink, black, musical and even spinning trees!

Where Else Do You Find Christmas Trees?

Many villages, towns and cities have a Christmas tree for people to enjoy outside. These trees are usually decorated with lights and are much bigger.



Questions

1. Which day do most people get their Christmas tree decorated by?

2. Name a Christmas tree decoration we use now and one that people used to use.

3. Where in London is the famous Christmas tree from Norway?

4. Which country has the largest floating Christmas tree?

5. Why do some people like real trees? Which do you like?

6. Who started the Christmas tree tradition in England?
