

FAMILY HOLIDAY PRIORITIES

Use this worksheet to help your family clarify the traditions they hold dear, eliminate any that are not as fun anymore and possibly find some new traditions they might want to start. Sit down with your whole family (little kids too!) and use these questions to spark a great discussion.

1. What is your favorite holiday tradition?
2. Which activity did you enjoy most last year?
3. What was your least favorite activity?
4. What went well last year? Did you make changes that helped things go more smoothly?
5. What caused the most stress for you last year? Were there too many activities? Did your regular household chores fall by the wayside?
6. What are your expectations for the holiday season?
7. Are there any activities (things friends did, you read about or saw) that you would like to try this year?

Here are some holiday tradition ideas:

- * Holiday movie night
- * Books to read as a family
- * Baking
- * Secret gifts to neighbors, friends
- * Create a Holiday “Idea Book” of things to try
- * Make gifts for family and friends, helps kids appreciate the holiday more
- * Cookie (or candy, ornaments etc.) exchange with friends and family
- * Christmas Eve present (pajamas are a good one!)
- * Annual ornament—something each child can take with them when they have their first tree in their own home!
- * Drive around the neighborhood with the best lights, or head to an area light display
- * Make an old fashioned popcorn garland or gingerbread house. Buy a kit if you are not a baker, decorating the house is the fun part!
- * Go to the grocery, department or toy store with the whole family and choose some items to donate to a local charity.



SCHEDULING

Look closely at your family values that you just determined. These are your high priority activities for the season.

To make sure you are able to get everything in, schedule everything NOW. Big and small—put it all on the calendar. You can always move things around later if it is absolutely necessary, but having it on your calendar will make you more aware of the events you wanted to include.

It will help you prioritize as well. If something comes up and you realize that you need to move one of your “family values” activities, you may decide that the new event is not really as important.

At the end of the holiday season, this will help you avoid the “Oh no! We didn’t get to that this year” feeling.

PARTY PLANNING

In the last week or so leading up to your holiday party, put together a "party bag". As you think of things you might need, toss them in. (This also works when you are going on a trip) Your party bag should contain anything you think you might need for the party. Keep it in an easily accessible location during the party. It is an idea that anyone can use for any party that will make things go much smoother because you are less likely to be looking for whatever it is you forgot. It works for a party in the house, in your yard or at an outside location.

Customize this list to suit your needs; here are some of the items that can be included:

- * Guest List (use this to keep track of who has arrived and again later to note any gifts they gave)
- * Pen
- * Tape (For hanging decorations, securing tablecloths, etc.)
- * Scissors
- * Candles for cake (for birthday parties)
- * Lighter
- * Wine bottle opener, beer bottle opener
- * Garbage bag (wrapping paper)
- * Knife to cut the cake
- * Extras for crafts or games that you are doing
- * Prizes for games
- * Camera
- * Extra data card/battery for camera

DECEMBER PLANNER

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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HOLIDAY CARDS

Keeping up with family and friends through holiday cards is a time honored tradition. The downside is that it can be a lot of work. First and foremost, decide if this is a tradition that is important to you and something you want to keep doing. There may be many other ways that you keep in touch with friends and family throughout the year so it might be fine for you to skip this. If not, there are some ways to help keep it a manageable task.

- * Start with a merged, purged list of who is nice (and who is a relative). Be ruthless. If you haven't heard from someone for years, you probably don't need to send them a card.
- * Consolidate your list somewhere you can use it again and again. Technology is a great way to solve this and you can use it to print address labels, saving the time it takes to address all the envelopes. People really care about your personal touch on the card itself, a nice label is fine for the outside.
- * For a personal touch without a lot of effort on your part, try the new photo cards available from many places (Shutterfly is my favorite). They let you tell the story of your year in pictures—remember the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words?
- * Break the tasks down into chunks and try doing them while you are doing something else like watching TV. Sign your name on all the cards at one sitting, put the address labels on the envelopes at another sitting, you get the picture.
- * Or, hire someone to do it for you! This can help you have time for other, high priority activities!

KITCHEN READY

Whether you are having people over or visiting other homes, there are a few things you can do now to help yourself be ready for anything.

- * Take inventory of your pantry, fridge and freezer. Then, stock up on items you know you will use for the holidays. If you bake, get lots of flour, sugar, etc.
- * If you entertain and sometimes have last minute guests keep things like crackers, cheese, olives, chips, dips (or sour cream and dip mixes), etc. on hand so that you can always put out some snacks. Make a batch of your go-to cookie dough and keep it in the freezer for fresh cookies any time.
- * Keep a list of go-to recipes that you can make quickly and with items you keep on hand. Take some time one day and make some treats ahead of time to have for the rest of the season. Think about making meals and freezing them so that the prep work is done for you.

