

Christmas customs



In Britain and America Christmas is a time of fun. People decorate their homes and offices with brightly coloured paper chains and balloons. At work, especially in Britain, there are **Christmas parties**, often with music, dancing and games (and often too much alcohol!).

People say **Merry Christmas** or **Happy Christmas**. The word Christmas is often shortened to **Xmas**. People give or send **Christmas cards** to all their friends, relatives, neighbours and colleagues. They put the cards they get on the mantelpiece or hang them up on pieces of string in their homes.

Most people put up a **Christmas tree** in their living room. Some have a real tree, but today many people have an artificial tree. People put up their trees a few days before Christmas and decorate them with brightly coloured tinsel, baubles and fairy lights. There's usually a star or a fairy on the top of the tree.

In December groups of **carol singers** sing carols and collect money for charity. Carol singers sing in shopping centres and on the streets or go from door to door.

Mistletoe and **holly** are typical of Christmas. People make **holly wreaths** and hang them on their front doors. They hang up sprigs of mistletoe, for example in doorways. When two people meet under the mistletoe, they stop and kiss! In America many people decorate their houses and gardens with lots of **Christmas lights** and **illuminations**.

The 24th December is called **Christmas Eve**. Christmas Eve isn't a public holiday. The shops are usually open, and people often work until lunchtime. In the evening, children hang up their stockings for their presents and often go to bed early. Teenagers and young adults often go out to parties in pubs and discos.

The 25th December is called **Christmas Day**. It's a public holiday. People open their Christmas presents on Christmas Day. Children often find their presents in a pillow case or stocking at the end of their beds or in the sitting room next to the fireplace (if there is one). Traditionally parents tell their children that **Father Christmas** (or Santa Claus in the USA) brings the presents during the night! The story goes that he travels through the sky on a sleigh pulled by reindeer. He lands on the rooftops and goes down the chimney to deliver the presents to each house!

On Christmas Day families traditionally have a big **Christmas Dinner** together. Before they start the meal they pull **Christmas crackers** and everyone wears their paper hat during the mealtime!

The 26th December is called **Boxing Day**. It's a public holiday. It's a day for relaxing or visiting relatives and friends.

The 31st December is called **New Year's Eve**. It's not a public holiday. People have parties and in America there are firework displays. Traditionally in Britain there are no fireworks at New Year. At midnight people join arms and sing the song 'Auld Lang Syne'. People say **Happy New Year!** They don't say Merry New Year!

The 1st January is called **New Year's Day**. It's a public holiday.

What there is and what there's not!

- People don't celebrate St Nicholas on 6th December.
- Today you can buy advent calendars in Britain and the USA, sometimes filled with chocolate. There is no tradition of giving advent calendars with small presents for each day.
- People don't bake traditional Christmas cookies. But they do bake **mince pies** (in Britain) and **Christmas cake** (in Britain and America). Mince pies are small pies filled with mincemeat, a mixture of sugar, raisins, currants and sultanas. They are very sweet. There is no meat in a mince pie! Christmas cake and Christmas pudding are not the same thing. Christmas pudding is a very rich, sweet dessert full of dried fruit. It is served hot, usually with brandy butter or brandy sauce as the dessert at Christmas dinner. Christmas cake is a rich fruit cake. The cake is covered with marzipan and then with white icing. It is decorated to look Christmassy.
- People don't give presents on Christmas Eve. They give them on Christmas Day.
- People don't usually put candles on their Christmas trees. They have small fairy lights.
- 'Dinner for one' isn't on TV on New Year's Eve. In fact, 'Dinner for one' is completely unknown to people in Britain and America!
- People don't say 'Have a good slide into the New Year'. They just say Happy New Year.



Christmas customs glossary

- 2 **decorate** [ˈdekəreɪt] schmücken
brightly coloured [ˈbraɪtli ˈkɔləd] farbenfroh
- 3 **paper chains** [ˈpeɪpə tʃeɪns] Papiergirlanden
balloons [bəˈluːnz] Luftballons
- 7 **shortened to** [ˈʃɔːtənd tuː] verkürzt zu
Xmas [ˈeksməs] (short for Christmas) Weihnachten
- 8 **send** [send] schicken
- 9 **put** [pʊt] legen, stellen
- 10 **get** [get] bekommen
mantelpiece [ˈmæntlpiːs] Kaminsims
hang up [hæŋ ʌp] aufhängen
piece of string [piːs ɒf strɪŋ] Stück Schnur
- 12 **real** [riəl] echt
tree [triː] Baum
- 14 **artificial** [ˌɑːtɪˈfɪʃəl] unecht
a few [ə fjuː] ein paar
- 16 **tinsel** [ˈtɪnsəl] Lametta
baubles [ˈbɔːbls] Flitterzeug
fairy lights [ˈfeəri laɪts] Lichterkette
star [stɑː] Stern
- 17 **fairy** [ˈfeəri] Fee
on the top of [ɒn ðə tɒp ɒf] (oben) auf
- 18 **carol singers** [ˈkærəl ˈsɪŋəz] kleine Chöre, die Weihnachtslieder singen (wie Sternsinger)
carol [ˈkærəl] christliches Weihnachtslied
- 19 **collect money** [kəˈlekt ˈmʌni] Geld sammeln
- 20 **go from door to door** [gəʊ frəm dɔː tə dɔː] von Tür zu Tür gehen
- 21 **mistletoe** [ˈmɪsltəʊ] Mistel(-zweig)
holly (wreath) [ˈhɒli (riːθ)] Stechpalme(nkranz) (Weihnachtskranz)
typical of [ˈtɪpɪkəl ɒf] typisch für
- 23 **sprig** [sprɪg] Zweig
doorway [ˈdɔːweɪ] (Tür-)Eingang
- 26 **lights** [laɪts] Beleuchtung, Lichter
illuminations [ɪˌluːmɪˈneɪʃənz] Beleuchtung
- 30 **stockings** [ˈstɒkɪŋ] Strümpfe
- 31 **young adults** [jʌŋ ˈædʌlts] junge Leute
- 34 **present** [ˈprezənt] Geschenk
- 35 **pillow case** [ˈpɪləʊ keɪs] (Kopf-)Kissenbezug
- 37 **next to** [nekst tuː] neben
fireplace [ˈfaɪə pleɪs] Kamin
if there is one [ɪf ðə ɪz wʌn] falls/wenn es einen gibt
traditionally [trəˈdɪʃənəli] traditionell
- 39 **during (the night)** [ˈdʒʊərəɪŋ (ðə naɪt)] in/während (der Nacht)
- 40 **travel** [ˈtrævəl] reisen
through [θruː] durch
the sky [skaɪ] der Himmel
sleigh [sleɪ] Schlitten
- 41 **pulled by** [pʊld baɪ] gezogen von
reindeer [ˈreɪndɪə] Rentier
land [lænd]
- rooftop** [ˈruːftɒp] Dach
- 42 **chimney** [ˈtʃɪmni] Schornstein
deliver [dɪˈlɪvə] bringen
- 45 **wear** [weə] tragen
- 52 **firework display** [ˈfaɪəwɜːk dɪˈsplɛɪ] Feuerwerk
- 53 **fireworks** [ˈfaɪəwɜːks] Feuerwerk
join arms [dʒɔɪn ɑːms] sich unterhaken
arm [ɑːm] Arm
- 59 **celebrate** [ˈseləbreɪt] feiern
- 61 **filled with chocolate** [fɪld wɪθ ˈtʃɒklət] mit Schokolade gefüllt
- 64 **bake** [beɪk] backen
cookies [ˈkʊkiːs] Kekse, Plätzchen
- 67 **mincemeat** [ˈmɪnsmiːt] süße Gebäckfüllung aus Dörrobst und Sirup
a mixture of [ə ˈmɪkstʃə ɒv] eine Mischung aus
- 68 **raisin** [ˈreɪsɪn] Rosine
currant [ˈkʌrənt] Korinthe
sultana [sʌlˈtɑːnə] Sultanine
sweet [swiːt] süß
- 71 **rich** [rɪtʃ] gehaltvoll, schwer
full of [fʊl ɒf] gefüllt mit
- 72 **dried fruit** [draɪd fruːt] Dörr-, Trockenobst
hot [hɒt] heiß
- 75 **covered with** [ˈkʌvəd wɪθ] bedeckt/überzogen mit
marzipan [ˈmɑːzɪpən] Marzipan
icing [ˈaɪsɪŋ] Zuckerguss
- 79 **candle** [ˈkændl] Kerze
- 82 **(completely) unknown to** [(kəmˈpliːtli) ʌnˈknəʊn tuː] jmdm. total unbekannt
- 84 **slide** [slaɪd] Rutsch



True or False?

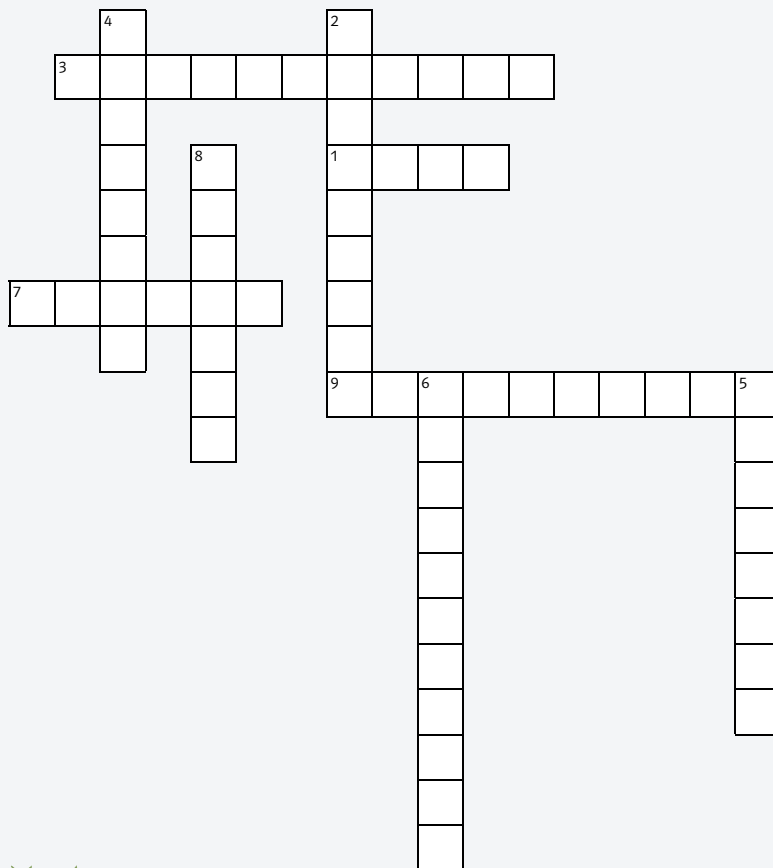
Read the text "Christmas customs", lines 1 – 57. Read the sentences below.

Are they true or false? Mark the right answer: T or F. Correct the wrong answers, too.

- | | T | F |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. English people like to organise parties at work before Christmas. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Every English family sends and receives many Christmas cards. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. When two people meet under a mistletoe, they shake hands. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. On Christmas Eve English people are on holidays. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Children hang up their shoes for their presents. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Father Christmas travels on a sleigh pulled by horses. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Everyone goes back to work on Boxing Day. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. "Boxing day" is a day with a lot of boxing competitions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. At midnight on 31st December, English people sing "Auld Lang Syne". | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. In English we say "Happy Christmas!" and "Merry New Year!" | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Crossword

Read the text, lines 59 – 85. Answer the questions and write the words in the crossword.



ACROSS →

- 1: At Christmas, English people bake Christmas ...
- 3: People put ... on their Christmas tree.
- 7: This ingredient makes a special butter or sauce for Christmas.
- 9: What do English people NOT celebrate on the 6th December?

DOWN ↓

- 2: English people eat these small pies at Christmas.
- 4: English people cover their Christmas cake with icing and ...
- 5: Mincemeat is a mixture of raisins, currants and ...
- 6: What do we celebrate on the 31st December?
- 8: Christmas ... is a hot dessert for Christmas.





Solutions

True or False?

1. T
2. T
3. F (They kiss.)
4. F (People work on Christmas Eve.)
5. F (They hang up their stockings.)
6. F (Father Christmas travels on a sleigh pulled by reindeers.)
7. F (Boxing day is a public holiday.)
8. F (It is a day to relax and visit friends and relatives.)
9. T
10. F (We say "Merry Christmas!" and "Happy New Year!")

Crossword

ACROSS →

- 1: cake
- 3: fairy lights
- 7: brandy
- 9: St Nicholas

DOWN ↓

- 2: mince pies
- 4: marzipan
- 5: sultanas
- 6: New Year's Eve
- 8: pudding

