



## The 12 days of Christmas

"On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, a partridge in a pear tree."

The familiar lyrics of this tune are sung as part of Christmas caroling and holiday celebrations, reaching a crescendo each time singers belt out "five golden rings." The song is an English Christmas carol that was written in 1720. While it references plenty of gift-giving, it's easy to assume the song is about giving Christmas gifts. However, the 12 days in the song actually refer to the birth of Jesus Christ.

The 12 days of Christmas, also known as the Twelvetime, refers to the festive Christian season that celebrates the Nativity of Jesus. In fact, the start of these days occurs on December 25 and extends until the evening of January 5th, the day

before the Epiphany, known as Twelfth Night. Each day corresponds to a remembrance of different religious events or people.

Christmas celebrants can celebrate well into the new year. Commemorating the 12 days of Christmas can include small festivities from December 25 to January 5. On Twelfth Night, historically known for parties, modern-day fanfare can mark the culmination of the Christmas season — with the last of gift-giving occurring on the Epiphany.

Gift-giving, hosting friends and family, attending religious services, participating in charitable events, or opening one's home to neighbors and those who can use some companionship are all ways to make the 12 days of Christmas more special.

## How to make Christmas Eve special for kids

Christmas Eve is viewed differently by different people, even those who live under the same Santa-ready roof. Adults may see Christmas Eve as crunch time when they must prepare food for the next day or set up presents for their children to open in the morning. Children, on the other hand, are focused on Santa's visit and little else.

Parents naturally want to make Christmastime as special as possible for their children, and that may involve ensuring that Christmas Eve is just as memorable as Christmas Day. The following are some ways to impart more magic into Christmas Eve celebrations.

### Attend Mass at midnight

Practicing Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on Christmas. On Christmas Eve, churches often hold celebrations that may include late-evening or midnight masses that celebrate the birth of Christ when the calendar switches over to December 25. While it does make for a late night, it can be thought-provoking for kids and a unique experience unlike any other.

### Bake fresh cookies

Children like to leave out



a plate of cookies and a glass of milk for Santa. That makes Christmas Eve a perfect time to whip up a fresh batch of cookies. Explore different recipes to come up with a unique offering each year.

### Read a Christmas story

Watching television or looking at a tablet or mobile phone before bed can be too stimulating when it's time for children to wind down for bed. Choose a holiday tale or tales that can be read as a Christmas Eve

bedtime story. Reciting the poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas ('Twas the Night Before Christmas)" is a great way to set the Christmas Eve mood.

### Make a batch of 'reindeer dust'

Why should Santa's reindeer be left out when it comes to receiving treats? Reindeer dust, made from a combination of oatmeal, rice cereal, dried fruits, and glitter (if desired), is purported to attract Santa's reindeer and provide them a nibble at

the same time. Plus, it's generally safe for other animals in the yard to eat.

### Go caroling

Caroling may not be the norm, but some families may want to revive it. Close-knit communities can organize family-centric caroling opportunities and roam the cul-de-sacs and other pedestrian-friendly areas singing popular songs.

Christmas Eve is a great time to embrace various traditions that help to make the season even more special.

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