



Christmas customs



In Britain 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!

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) 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 but 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 Sinterklaas on 5th December.
- People bake **mince pies** and **Christmas cake**. 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.



Christmas customs glossary

- 1 **decorate** [ˈdekəreɪt] versieren
- 2 **brightly coloured** [ˈbraɪtli ˈkɒləd] vrolijk gekleurd
paper chains [ˈpeɪpə tʃeɪns] papieren slingers
- 3 **balloons** [bəˈluːnz] ballonnen
- 7 **shortened to** [ˈʃɔːtənd tuː] verkort tot
Xmas [ˈɛksməs] (short for Christmas) Kerstmis
- 8 **send** [send] sturen
- 9 **put** [pʊt] neerzetten
get [get] krijgen
- 10 **mantelpiece** [ˈmæntlpiːs] schoorsteenmantel
hang up [hæŋ ʌp] ophangen
piece of string [piːs ɒf strɪŋ] touwtje, stuk touw
- 13 **real** [riəl] echte
tree [triː] boom
- 14 **artificial tree** [ɑːtɪˈfiʃəl triː] kunstboom
a few [ə fjuː] een paar
- 16 **tinsel** [ˈtɪnsəl] kerstslingers
baubles [ˈbɔːbls] kerstballen
fairy lights [ˈfeəri laɪts] kerstboomverlichting
star [stɑː] ster
- 17 **fairy** [ˈfeəri] fee
on the top of [ɒn ðə tɒp ɒf] bovenop
- 18 **carol singers** [ˈkærəl ˈsɪŋəz] kleine koren, die kerstliederen zingen
carol [ˈkærəl] kerstlied
- 19 **collect money** [ˈkɒlekt ˈmʌni] geld inzamelen
- 20 **go from door to door** [gəʊ frɒm dɔː tə dɔː] van deur tot deur gaan
- 21 **mistletoe** [ˈmɪsltəʊ] maretak
holly (wreath) [ˈhɒli (riːθ)] hulst(krans) (kerstkrans)
typical of [ˈtɪpɪkəl ɒf] typisch voor
- 23 **sprig** [sprɪg] takje
doorway [ˈdɔːweɪ] deuropening
- 29 **stockings** [ˈstɒkɪŋ] kousen
- 30 **young adults** [jʌŋ ˈædʌlts] jonge mensen
- 33 **present** [ˈprezənt] cadeau
- 35 **pillow case** [ˈpɪləʊ keɪs] kussensloop
- 36 **next to** [nekst tuː] naast
fireplace [ˈfaɪə pleɪs] openhaard
if there is one [ɪf ðə ɪz wʌn] als er een is
- 37 **traditionally** [trəˈdɪʃənəli] traditiegetrouw, vanouds
- 38 **during (the night)** [ˈdjʊəɪŋ (ðə naɪt)] tijdens (de nacht)
- 39 **travel** [ˈtrævəl] reizen
through [θruː] door
the sky [skaɪ] de lucht
- 40 **sleigh** [sleɪ] slee
pulled by [pʊld baɪ] getrokken door
reindeer [ˈreɪndə] rendier(en)
land [lænd] landen
- 41 **rooftop** [ˈruːftɒp] (top van het) dak
chimney [ˈtʃɪmni] schoorsteen
deliver [dɪˈlɪvə] bezorgen, brengen
- 45 **wear** [weə] dragen
- 52 **fireworks** [ˈfaɪəwɜːks] vuurwerk
- 53 **join arms** [dʒɔɪn ɑːms] inhaken, elkaar een arm geven
arm [ɑːm] arm
- 59 **celebrate** [ˈseləbreɪt] vieren
- 60 **bake** [beɪk] bakken
- 61 **mincemeat** [ˈmɪnsmiːt] zoete pasteivulling (zonder vlees) van rozijnen appel, suiker en kruiden
a mixture of [ə ˈmɪkstʃə ɒv] een mengsel van
- 62 **raisin** [ˈreɪsɪn] rozijn
currant [ˈkʌrənt] krent
sultana [sʌlˈtɑːnə] sultanarozijn
sweet [swiːt] zoet
- 65 **rich** [rɪtʃ] vol, rijkelijk
full of [fʊl ɒf] gevuld met, vol met
dried fruit [draɪd fruːt] gedroogd fruit
- 66 **hot** [hɒt] heet
- 68 **covered with** [ˈkʌvəd wɪθ] bedekt met
- 69 **marzipan** [ˈmɑːzɪpæn] marsepein
icing [ˈaɪsɪŋ] suikerglazuur