

HELPING THE KIDS MAKE CHRISTMAS

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The laughter and the joy of children are an important part of the magic of the Holiday Season, there is no doubt about that. Keeping them occupied, especially when they are on their holiday break from school, can be a challenging time.

To meet this challenge, every household develops routines and traditions. Most adults can cast their minds back and smile fondly at memories of Christmas crafts and traditions. Inevitably they have carried these traditions forward into their own families. There is a reason that old fashioned traditions like stringing popcorn to decorate the tree and making Christmas bells from egg cartons and aluminum foil have been around for generations.

If you are dreading the upcoming Holiday Season, where you are trying to juggle grown-up social obligations with cherished family time, perhaps some of these ideas might come in handy.



Making Ornaments for the Tree or Gift Giving

Apple sauce ornaments: If you've got a surplus of apple sauce in the pantry, this is the perfect craft. It will, however, require a huge quantity of cinnamon. Start with $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup of apple sauce and 2 bottles of cinnamon. A standard bottle of cinnamon

powder from the dollar store has a little less than 2.5 ounces, if you are buying yours in bulk. Pour this mixture into a well-sealed plastic bag and let the kids knead it until it begins to form a thick dough. Roll the dough out between two sheets of plastic wrap to prevent it from sticking to the rolling pin. Remove the top layer of plastic wrap and using smaller (not larger) cookie cutters press out shapes suitable to make Christmas ornaments for the tree. Use a straw to press out a hole at the top to thread a string through the finished ornament. The ornaments can then be carefully placed on a drying rack and left out to dry in a warm dry place for 2-3 days.



Working with Paper

If your kids are good with paints, perhaps you could let them help with Christmas preparation by making wrapping paper. A generous supply of plain brown wrapping paper, some brushes and a selection of water soluble paints will keep them occupied for several hours. This also works

well for gifts that will fit in large plain envelopes (like homemade calendars). If your household sends out Holiday greetings to distant friends and family, maybe the kids can even create a family Christmas card design.



Enjoying the Outdoors

If you have snow piled up in the yard, maybe the kids can help with the outdoor decorating too. It's a great way to repurpose empty squirt bottles, like the ones from dish washing soap. Mix up some seasonal colors with food coloring and water, then send the kids out to paint the snow. This is the kind of outdoor activity they have fun with all winter long, because every snowfall creates a fresh canvas.



Building a Gingerbread House

Although it is possible to make slabs of gingerbread cookie at home and thus create a house from scratch, reasonably inexpensive kits are easy to find this time of year. Add some icing and a range of brightly colored candies and kids can entertain themselves for hours as they create their fantasy holiday home in miniature.

Letting the kids help create the family Christmas will leave them with lingering, fond memories that they carry forward to their own future families. I hope these few simple ideas will spark an idea for fun with your family this year. [LH](#)