

## Seasons Greetings along with our final newsletter of 2021!

As we are almost nearing the festive holiday season, this edition focusses upon providing some information to help support children during this time, as well as a range of ideas and activities to help entertain families over the festive period.

Wishing all families and schools a Happy Christmas,

From The Autism Support Team



## Ready for Christmas?

Christmas can be a tricky time for children with Autism, there are lots of changes at home (decorations), school (off timetable, different activities) and even going to the shops (music playing)! Here's some ways you can help

### Preparing

- Prepare your child by discussing the facts around Christmas, what it means and what will happen. For example, make sure they know when you will be putting up the Christmas decorations and include your child in the preparation.
- Visual supports like calendars can be really helpful to remind your child of some of the upcoming events, such as when the school holiday starts to when friends and relatives may be visiting.

### Schedules

Many autistic people benefit from some routine and you may wish to try and make your festive holiday as predictable as possible:

- Try and keep some aspects of your daily routine the same in the lead up to Christmas and on Christmas Day itself, for example getting ready or keeping breakfast to the usual time.
- Unpredictability around present opening can be difficult. Perhaps it would help if your child knew what presents they will be receiving.
- Don't feel that presents all need to be opened on Christmas morning, this may cause added pressure and stress. If they have several gifts you could open a few in the days before or following Christmas and spread the celebration, presents can be wrapped in cling film or clear plastic if children don't like new/surprises.
- Incorporate a familiar Christmas activity that they enjoy into their daily schedule. This could be opening the advent calendar or switching on the Christmas tree lights. It might be worthwhile to keep a dedicated Christmas-free zone in your home for key moments that your child may find stressful.

### Decorations

- Get them involved in putting any decorations up (don't do it when they are sleeping), introduce your child gradually to any changes in the environment – give them the chance to get familiar with any decorations
- Try and keep decorations that might overload them away from communal areas, e.g. flashing Christmas lights could go in bedrooms rather than in the living room.
- Make up a booklet illustrating items and events to support your child to build up an idea of what to expect. For example, use pictures of Christmas tree/decorations, presents, the type of food you might eat.



# Christmas Resources



## Resources

[Website with ideas of Christmas activities at home](#)

[Calming strategies for Kids](#) and a [sensory guide](#)

[BBC blog about Autism and Christmas](#)

[Grants available to support families with disabled children](#)

## Autism Friendly Activities

[Virtual Santa's Grotto and link to buy gifts made by autistic adults](#)

[Lambeth winter holiday programme for ASD and ADHD children](#)

[Southwark Holiday Activities](#)

[Autism and ADHD Christmas Club](#)

[Holiday Play Schemes from Resources for Autism](#)

[Autism Friendly cinema performances](#)



## Super Seven



Here are some fun festive activities to try at home

- Will it snow this year? [Make your own](#) or [buy it!](#)
- [Free Activities from Twinkl](#)
- Fancy making some [festive slime](#)?
- Festive scavenger hunts—[indoor](#) or [outdoor](#)
- Does your child do 'bucket time' or attention autism at school [here](#) are some ideas to carry it on at home
- Have a sing song and the everyone can learn Makaton [Singing Hands](#)
- Make a [happiness box](#)—this can be taken around when visiting places and people to keep kids happy!

Loads more ideas [here](#) if you are feeling crafty!

## Video links

[Video of tips for Christmas](#)

[Makaton Santa message](#)

[Video recipes for people with learning difficulties—this one is easy mince pies!](#)

[BBC News interview with Christine McGuinness from 2019 about sensory overload at Christmas](#)

## PDFs

[National Autistic Society Christmas resources](#)

[Communicate in Print \(symbol\) Christmas cards to print and colour](#)

[Communicate in Print Christmas activities](#)

[Symbols to support making a schedule for home over Christmas](#)

[A calendar to help countdown to Christmas](#)

[Social Story to explain some of the changes over Christmas](#)