

Merry Christmas 2007

Mistletoe: This is a plant that looks like this . There's a fun tradition that North Americans follow during Christmas. Mistletoe is often hung from a doorway between two rooms. If someone stands under the mistletoe, it is customary for someone else (usually a member of the opposite sex) to kiss him/her. It can be quite a surprise to be suddenly kissed, but the person who is kissed usually quickly realizes they must be standing under mistletoe.

Christmas tree: This is a decorated tree. Presents are placed under the tree. On Christmas morning, families and friends open their presents together.

Trimming the tree – decorating the tree is called 'trimming the tree'.

Christmas ornaments – are ornaments used to decorate the tree and placed around the house.

Christmas lights – strings of lights used to decorate the Christmas tree. Many people also put up Christmas lights on houses and decorate their trees outside with lights, too. It's quite a sight to drive around town looking at the Christmas displays different people have put up.

lawn ornaments – decorations placed on people's lawns. Popular lawn ornaments are Santa Claus, Reindeer, Rudolph, Sleighs, Mangers and Elves.

Manger – historically, a small wooden trough that animals ate hay from. Jesus was put in a manger after he was born, so some people set up a manger with a plastic baby in it and animals around.

Nativity scene – is a scene depicting Jesus' birth. Usually Joseph and Mary are in a stable with shepherds and magi or wise men with gifts gathered around, angels on the roof and a star above the whole scene. Some nativity scenes are quite small and may sit on people's furniture. Other scenes are life size or bigger.

Chestnuts – are commonly eaten at Christmas. There's a famous Christmas song, "Chestnuts roasting by an open fire"

White Christmas – a Christmas with snow.

Stockings – literally, 'socks.' Nowadays, they are quite big-you would have to be about 10 feet tall to fit into the stockings most children hang. People hang stockings in front of a fireplace. Small presents are placed in stockings and usually opened on Christmas morning.

Swaddling clothes – narrow strips of cloth wrapped around an infant (Merriam-Webster On-line). Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes and placed in the manger

Santa Claus – a large, plump man dressed in a big red suit, big black belt and carrying a sack full of gifts which he distributes to children all around the world on Christmas Eve. Santa Claus is also called Santa and St. Nicholas or just St. Nick. Santa Claus is a derivation of St. Nicholas, the original ‘Santa Claus’. To learn more about St. Nicholas, go to Christmas ESL Lessons - St. Nicholas Story

Reindeer – Santa rides in a sleigh that is pulled by reindeer. The most famous reindeer is Rudolph, the red-nose reindeer.

Holly – a common Christmas ornament which has bright red berries. To learn more about Holly at Christmas, go to History of Holly Christmas ESL Lesson

Poinsettia – this plant is also commonly used to decorate at Christmas.

Sleigh – a ‘carriage’ that rides on snow. Santa's Sleigh

Gift wrapped – when you’re shopping, you can often ask the salesclerk if they have a gift-wrapping service.

Eggnog – a drink commonly served at Christmas parties. If you’d like to find out how to make some, you can find Cyril Collins grandfather’s eggnog recipe at this Christmas ESL - eggnog recipe (with or without alcohol)

Christmas carols – songs that are sung at Christmas. If you would like to hear some of them, and read the lyrics, go to Christmas ESL Lessons - Carols and Christmas songs

(Christmas) carolers – are groups of people that walk down a street going from house to house singing Christmas carols. Usually the people in the house will come to the door and watch the carolers sing. It is a tradition to give each of the carolers something after they sing - usually a small snack such as a chocolate, or some other treat around the house, or even a glass of eggnog, if the carolers are old enough to drink.

A Christmas Carol – Charles Dickens’ classic story about greed at Christmas. The most famous character, Scrooge, is now a synonym for a stingy person. You may hear people say, “Don’t be a Scrooge.”

Christmas Greetings – there are many greetings that people use at Christmas, but the most common are “Merry Christmas,” “Season’s Greetings,” and “Happy New Year,” although some people say “Happy New Year’s” which is a shortened form of “Happy New Year’s Eve.”

The Holiday Season – the time running from just before Christmas until New Year’s

Christmas shopping – there is so much shopping to be done at Christmas that people refer to it as their “Christmas shopping.” You might hear someone say, “Have you finished your Christmas shopping?”

The First Christmas – obviously, refers to the birth of Jesus over 2000 years ago.

Write a letter to Santa Claus – many children write letters to Santa Claus telling him what they would like to get for Christmas.

Christmas Wish list – a list of things that someone wants for Christmas. Usually children make a wish list. Some give it to Santa when they sit on his knee.

Sit on Santa Claus’s knee – it is a common tradition to go to a person dressed up as Santa Claus and tell him what you would like to get for Christmas.

Santa’s helpers – elves, usually dressed in red or green.

Christmas eve – the evening of December 24, also called “The night before Christmas.”

Christmas dinner – a big dinner on Christmas day. Usually families gather together for Christmas dinner.

carving the bird – cutting the meat and handing it out to people is called ‘carving’ the bird

Activities:

Christmas ESL Lessons and Activities - Internet Search

Where does the tradition of hanging mistletoe from doorways come from?

Why is holly used at Christmas?

What is the symbolism behind holly?

Why do people decorate Christmas trees at Christmas?

Why do people kiss under mistletoe?

Where does the custom of Christmas caroling come from?

Where does Christmas come from?

Where does the tradition of Santa Claus come from? How has it changed through the years?

Make a list of as many Christmas customs and traditions that you can think of. Where did each of these traditions come from? The internet lists a lot of different origins for many of the traditions. Which explanations do you believe? Which explanations do you doubt?

Does your culture celebrate Christmas? How is the way they celebrate it different from the way it is celebrated in North America? Are there any interesting traditions you’d like to tell us about?

How long does it take you to do all of your Christmas shopping?

How much do you usually spend on your Christmas shopping? Do you go into debt?
Many people go into debt at Christmas. Do you think people should go into debt at Christmas?

What does Christmas mean to you?

Are there any traditions you celebrate that it doesn't feel like it's Christmas if they're missing?

How many reindeer are there? Can you list all of their names?

Do you know any Christmas carols?

What's your favorite Christmas special on TV? Why