

Holiday Games & Activities

4th of July games

If you're hosting a 4th of July party, there are hours and hours to fill before the highlight events of the day begin - the fireworks. You'll want to have plenty of activities and games planned to keep everyone busy and entertained.

There are a variety of games you can plan that have a patriotic theme.

Balloon pass - This game involves relaying a balloon down a line of people. Use balloons that are red, white and blue and tell the participants they will be using their hands and their legs to pass the balloon down the line. Create two teams of people, and line them up in straight lines. Give the first person a balloon and tell them to put it between their legs, passing the balloon to the next person in line with their legs only. That person will take the balloon and pass it to the next person by putting it over their head. That third person will put the balloon between their legs and pass to the next person like that. The game continues until the balloon has passed all the way down the line. If you have a small group, require that the balloon get passed down the line and back again before declaring a winner.

Chalk it up - Pick a panel of judges (the oldest members of the family are the obvious picks) and have them become the official judges for a chalk contest. Break your guests into two teams (or more, depending on how many people are at the party) and give them each one or two containers of sidewalk chalk. Tell them to create a sidewalk picture that shows something patriotic, and tell them the flag must be included in the picture. Give them a time limit (depending on your group, this time limit might range from 10 minutes to 45 minutes) and then have the judges declare a winner after they have carefully examined all the artwork. You could have art-themed prizes for the winners.

Parade - One fun 4th of July activity that just screams "4th of July!" is a parade with decorated bikes, scooters and the like. Ask everyone who comes to the party to decorate their bike or scooter or other item in patriotic garb. You can have people bring them to the party already decorated and have a contest for "best bike", etc., but also fun is to have a decorating party within the party. Have all the items on hand to decorate the bikes and scooters and skateboards. You might have streamers, banners, flags, and ribbons. The children and adults can decorate their bikes and scooters as a party activity.

Guessing Game - These games are always popular for just about any occasion. Fill a large jar with peppermint candy (the red and white striped kind) and decorate it with blue and red ribbon. Have people guess how many candies are in the jar (which of course means you count as you place the candies in the jar). The winner, or the person who comes closest to the number without going over, gets the jar of candy.

Fireworks - If you're having fireworks at your home, you might have a big box of assorted fireworks. Everyone has their personal favorites and people might have clear ideas of what they want to see and hear. You can play a game to determine who gets to pick the next firework to go off next. You might ask trivia questions (why are there 13 stars on the flag?). Or you can have a dance off. While music plays in the background, each person who really wants to pick the next firework to go off has to dance the craziest, silliest dance they can come up with. Someone who's been designated a judge will decide who won the dance off and that person gets to pick the next fireworks item. Unless there are more fireworks than people, each person only gets to pick once.

Adult Christmas Games

Not all Christmas games have to be for children, or have to be serious. Good gracious, adults like to let their hair down and have a good, silly time too. Here are several games to get you started.

If this is a group that's not afraid of looking silly, here's just the game. Provide a pair of pantyhose for each team and a total of 8 balloons. When the game begins, the team should begin blowing up the balloons and the inflated balloons have to be put into the legs of the pantyhose. To make this game fair, the teams should be of equal number and the pantyhose not a petite size.

The game ends when someone gets all their balloons into the legs of the pantyhose, "wears" the antlers and sings the first verse of "Jingle Bells". Be sure to make everyone finish the game, however, so you can get a great picture of everyone in his or her pantyhose antlers.

For a fun relay-type game, how about making a Santa beard? Make a big bowl of cotton balls and get a container of Vaseline. Put some Vaseline on the chins of each member of each team (ideally, 2 teams of about 5 people each). The first players in line run to the bowl of cotton balls and sticks their chin in trying to get as many to stick to the Vaseline as possible. They run to the back of their line, so the next player can have a turn.

When everyone on a team has a beard, that team wins. As with the other game, be sure to take lots of pictures of everyone wearing their Santa beards. Also have plenty of towels and water to get the Vaseline off.

This next game is great for a smaller group of people who are open to a more quiet game. This is about packing Santa's bag. You start by saying, "I packed Santa's bag and in it I put pajamas." The next person continues with, "I packed Santa's bag and in it I put pajamas, and toilet paper." Each person continues, each time adding a new item, but also listing the items that were added before. You are out of the game when you miss an item. Someone could be sitting outside the game keeping a list of all the items so if the game goes on for a bit, you will know if someone misses an item.

If you're having a Christmas party for adults, why not offer up a fun game that's sure to remind them of a childhood favorite? Create a Christmas scavenger hunt. You will tell people to create teams (about 4 people per team is adequate, but you might want to have larger or smaller teams depending on the size of your party). Make a list of items they need to return with.

If you choose to keep the searching local, either at your home or in the neighborhood, include items like a miniature light string, a piece of holly, a leaf off a poinsettia plant, and the like. If you choose to have guests traipse all over town for items, you can have even more fun. You might require them to purchase a holly-decorated box of tissue, or have them provide photo proof that they went down your city's Christmas Tree Lane. Whatever it is, be creative and enjoy the process. People love this game, not only because it reminds them of childhood, but it helps people get to know other party guests they might know that well and it's a game that gets people working together, which can always be fun.

Everyone enjoys Hershey's kisses at Christmas. Divide your group into two teams and have two bowls of Hershey's kisses at the other end of the room. Give each team one set of oversized mittens or gloves. The first person in line runs to the bowl of kisses, and has to unwrap the kiss while wearing the oversized mittens/gloves and pop the kiss into their mouth. They run back, tag the next person in line, and exchange the mittens/gloves and the next person runs forward to get a chocolate

kiss. The winning team is the one in which all members have enjoyed a kiss first.

Boo Activitys

If you want to get your neighbors in the Halloween spirit, be sure to engage them in a little game known as "Boo!" It's a popular game in some parts of the country, while in others, nobody has heard of it.

You might live in a neighborhood where you think nobody will participate in a round robin type of event as this, but you might be surprised. Sometimes during the holidays people will step up and get involved where before they wouldn't. It's possible, anyway.

The game goes something like this, and then will be described in more detail later. You print up a few poems and instructions on colorful paper (likely, orange). You get a treat bucket, or bowl or something and fill it with candy. You can also "Boo" people with candles, Halloween socks, and really whatever your imagination comes up with. You "Boo" two people at a time, leaving the items anonymously on their doorstep. You leave it with the instructions and the poem and hope they "Boo" other neighbors. Once you are done, you tape up a large "Boo!" on your door so neighbors know not to hit you up again.

Specifically, here's how it's done. Start this game around the very end of September or very beginning of October. If you wait until everyone is decorated for Halloween, you're probably too late. You want this to spread around the neighborhood and that takes time, so you want to start it right as the season starts (or a little before, perhaps) and just as people are starting to think about Halloween. If you start too early, however, you might be out of luck as far as being able to purchase items goes.

So, it's the right time of the year and you're ready to go. Find a "Boo" poem and photocopy it. There are many variations of the poem. Here is a sampling:

"Boo!
To our good friends on the street;
Our homes' locations made us meet;
You now have been Boo'd, but who would we be?
We'll never tell, it's a secret, you see.
We placed these goodies for you and yours;
Then we ran fast, after knocking the door!
Happy Halloween!"

Or it might be a big longer, something like this:

"The air is cool, the season fall
Soon Halloween will come to all;
The neighbors are after things to do
In fact, a neighbor brought this to you;
"Boo" is a sign of friendship power
Just hang it up and watch it double by hour;
On your front door is where it works
It wards off solicitors and scary jerks;
The treat that came with friendly note
Are yours to keep; enjoy them both;
The power comes when friends like you
Copy this and make it two;

Then others here among our friends
Will give warm fuzzies that will not end;
We'll all have smiles upon our face
No one will know who "boo'ed" whose place;
Just one short day to share your Boo
You must be quick so they don't know who;
And don't forget a nifty treat
Like something cute or something sweet;
Please join the fun, let's really hear it
And spread some "Boos" and neighborhood spirit!

Be sure to include a cute graphic of a ghost or something else that looks like it might say "Boo!" You might want to include some details on the flyer about what should be done next, in case you think the poem itself won't be clear enough. Then attach the poem to the goodie bag, basket, whatever you have created, and run out one night dropping your goodies on peoples' doorsteps. If you are just getting this started in your neighborhood, be sure to do more than 2 houses. You might find that some people don't participate and in that case, you want to have "Boo"ed enough people that you will get adequate participation.

What you're striving for is a neighborhood full of "Boo" doors by Halloween night!

Christmas Day Games

Just because the gifts are opened and the paper strewn about the living room doesn't mean the fun of Christmas is over. Add some fun party games to Christmas day to extend the fun of Christmas.

If you have a large gathering on Christmas day, have fun with the hat game. When they arrive, give everyone a Santa hat. These are inexpensive and can be purchased for \$1 at the dollar store, or even less in bulk, if you plan ahead. As everyone goes about their business of getting food, chatting with others and the like, the room will look very festive with everyone wearing their Santa hats.

However, the object of this game is to not have your hat on. As people forget about the hats, the object is to get rid of your hat and not be the last one wearing a Santa hat. Inevitably there will be one person so wrapped up in a conversation or the buffet table, they forget to take off their hat and will be left the game's loser. This is a game that can be played again and again as you head forward with the day's festivities.

One fun memory game that kids particularly like is to make everyone pay careful attention to all the gifts that are opened on Christmas day. After the gifts are removed from the room (or you remove yourselves from the gift room) have everyone try and remember every single gift everyone got. Include stockings and any food gifts. Tell people they only have to remember the items that were opened that day, not any gifts they received and opened prior to Christmas day. This can be a fun game that's particularly popular with kids because they love to relive the gift magic. In addition, if they were so immersed with their own gifts they didn't notice anyone else's this is a good chance for them to educate themselves about what everyone got that day.

If you need a game to keep everyone busy before dinner, try the "guess me" game. Buy some large heavy socks, not low-rise, but the type that are worn outdoors in the winter that are thick and come at least to the calf. Put several items in the socks. Make sure identical items are in each sock. These items should be related to Christmas in some way. You might include a small ornament, scotch tape, a pinecone, a Hershey's kiss, and the like. Have each person feel the socks (having two socks just makes the game go faster, but you can play with just one sock), and write down their guesses about what's in the socks. Be sure to tell everyone how many items are in each sock. The winner gets, you guessed it, one of the socks!

If you have a bunch of wanna-be performers in your group on Christmas day, how about playing a little game of "Christmas Idol"? Set up a small table for the "judges" and have teams of 2 people (or individuals, if they want) sing a Christmas carol. Tell them to have a lot of fun with the song, and even add a Santa hat or other dress-up items if they wish. The winners can take home a CD of Christmas music. This game is particularly fun if just the children want to perform and be judged by the adults, or if, conversely, the adults perform and are judged by the children.

Christmas Eve Games

You don't often think to play games on Christmas Eve, but playing a game or two can be a lot of fun.

One fun game is ideally suited for anxious children, but could also be for adults, if you want to add some fun for gift giving. For children, this is a way to make that "open one gift on Christmas Eve" rule a little more exciting and make it last a little longer.

You create a hunt with clues, so the children have to follow the clues to find their gift. Instead of the gift being under the tree, for example, you might put it somewhere else, but the children will follow clues to find it. For this game, you can use anything to write your clues on. You could use Christmas cards in their envelopes that you had extras of, you might cut out Christmas tree shapes for this, or you might want to use ornaments.

Whichever method you choose, write a clue on each of your items and leave those around the house. You start by handing each child the first clue. It might say, "you sleep here every night" and the children will run to their beds. On their pillow you have placed another clue that might say, "mom's eggs taste better with this" and the children head to the spice cabinet, where they find another clue on the salt. The final clue (and depending on the ages of your children and their tolerance, you might have only 5 clues for this game, or many more) will be the gift itself. To make it extra fun, have the gift be under the tree. Your children won't see that coming!

If you have a large gathering on Christmas Eve, try a circle game. Have everyone get in a circle and the first person will start with, "in my Christmas stocking there is an apple" and the next person will add, "in my Christmas stocking there is an apple and a boot". Each person will continue on, remembering the previous items and the adding one of their own, and all in alphabetical order. If you miss an item, you're out of the game and the winner is the person who successfully remembers all the stocking items over and over again each time they have to recite the items and add to the list.

Looking for a little physical activity on Christmas Eve? How about a rousing game of musical chairs using Christmas music? This one can be particularly fun if you use upbeat and well-known Christmas music. Use songs everyone knows and require they sing along and dance while they run around the chairs. This adds a fun element because you are likely to have at least one person who gets so caught up in the music and dancing they don't realize the music has stopped. This game is played like any traditional game of musical chairs with the loser being the one who doesn't get a chair when the music stops.

Since the big event on Christmas Eve is Santa's arrival, play a game of "where's Santa"? In this game, everyone sits in a circle and one person is chosen to be Rudolph. That person leaves the room for a minute. A Santa is chosen among those left in the room. Rudolph returns and begins hunting for Santa. Rudolph should stand in the center of the circle and try to figure out which person is Santa. Santa, meanwhile, winks at other people in the circle. If someone gets winked at, they yell, "ho ho ho".

Once Rudolph figures out where Santa is, another Rudolph and another Santa are chosen and the game continues.

By Christmas Eve, your Christmas cards have been on display for a few weeks, so maybe it's time to play a game with them. Have someone set up a laundry basket, or a gift box a few feet away (the distance depends on the age of your players and ability). Have them try to toss the cards into the

box or basket. This sounds easy, but different cards of different weights and styles will react differently and can be harder than expected to get into the box or basket.

Christmas Games For Elementary Age Children

If you're planning a Christmas party for a group of elementary-age children, there are a myriad of really fun games you can include. Be sure to have lots of prizes and take lots of pictures because some of the games can be silly!

To get the kids moving around, start with the "fill the stocking" game. In this game, create teams so there are at least 3 people and no more than perhaps 6 people on each team. Have a stocking for each team. Place the stockings on the wall and have also a bowl of candy and spoons. The first person on each team will put the spoon in their mouth (backwards, so the bowl of the spoon is sticking out) and get some candy out of the bowl. Still holding their spoon in their mouth, they must walk or run to the stocking on the wall and get the candy in the stocking. They run back to the line and the next child has a turn (each child should have his or her on spoon). The game continues until the candy bowl is empty.

The obvious prize for the stocking game is a big bowl of candy!

Another active game is an "unwrap the game" relay. Provide two piles presents at one end of the room (these can be presents with real teats inside, or "dummy" wrapped presents). The children are divided into two teams and a relay is created. One person runs to the stack of gifts, unwraps it, throws away the paper and runs back. Then the next child in line runs up, unwraps a gift, throws away the paper and runs back. If the paper lands outside the trash can, the child must run back and put it back in the trashcan before returning to the line and allowing another person to take a turn.

If these two games are played first the kids might want a little rest. Now's the time to play a sit-down Christmas party game, like "remember this". Get a large cookie sheet or baking tray and fill it with Christmas-themed items. You might include an ornament, a candy cane, a Santa hat, garland, ribbon, etc. There should be at least 20 items on the tray. Give each child about 20 seconds to look at the items, then cover the tray and remove it from sight. Give the children another 20-30 seconds to remember everything they saw on the tray. Have them quickly write down their guesses. The prize is for whoever remembers the most items!

Another good sit down game and one that's also a learning game is a word find game. Provide children with a list of Christmas words and have them find other words within those words. For example, if one word is "reindeer" they might find in, deer, red, den, and so on. Longer words are best, so think of words like Christmas, snowballs, poinsettia, holly berry and the like).

Children love games that involve sitting in a circle and having fun that way. Here's a "circle" game children are sure to love. This tests their ability to remember little details about other people, like their voice. Have handy a sleigh, either one cut out of cardboard or a small one purchased a gift or dollar store. Blindfold one child and have another child hold the sleigh. The child with the sleigh calls out to the blindfolded child something like this:

Santa, where's your sleigh?
Someone's come and taken it away.
Who has it? Who?

The blindfolded child has to guess who has the sleigh. Give the child 3 chances to get it right before giving the sleigh and blindfold to other children.

For another sit down game, give each child a piece of paper and a pencil. Tell them to close their

eyes and then tell them what to draw. Give them the shapes, but don't tell them exactly what they are trying to draw (though most children will figure it out). So, first tell them to draw three circles, with the largest being on the bottom and the smallest on the top. Then tell them to draw dots for eyes, and buttons for a coat. Keep going until you have described a snowman. Then have the children open their eyes to see what they have actually drawn. Award a prize for the drawing that most closely resembles a snowman.

Christmas Party Games Young Children

When planning Christmas games for young children, the options are endless. Make sure you provide room to run, do a little planning and the kids are sure to have a good time.

Let's start with a few relay race ideas. Begin with a candy cane relay. Give each team 4 candy canes (and be sure to have a few more in case some break) and have the child who's running hold the candy canes between their fingers, with the crooked part of the cane hanging over their fingers. But tell them not to use their thumbs. The canes should be just carefully perched between their fingers.

The children run to their teammate, exchange the candy canes (again, only using fingers), and that teammate runs to the other end and does the same. The game is over when only one team still has candy canes that haven't dropped on the floor.

Another fun relay that kids love is pass the ornament. In this game, each team gets one ornament (a lightweight, basic thin glass one is fine) and a straw. They must blow through the straw to get the ornament down the line, then the next child blows on their straw to get the ornament back down the line. Make sure each child has a fresh straw, as you don't want everyone to get sick.

This next simple relay game can be played with just about anything that signifies Christmas. You could have the children pass a Santa hat (perhaps requiring them to wear the hat as they run down the line) or have them wear Christmas socks that they then have to take off and get to the next child during the relay.

"Santa Says" is a fun game that all children will know how to play because it's just like "Simon Says". Before playing it, confirm that each child is familiar with "Simon Says" and then create a series of orders from "Santa", like "Santa says, touch your toes", "Santa says bend your knees" and so on. But sometimes leave the "Santa says" part off and trick the children. Always a popular game!

Young children love the "freeze dance" which is often played in preschool and kindergarten. Only in this game, you create a Christmas freeze dance: here you play some Christmas music, let the children do a little dance, then turn the music off and the children must "freeze". If there will be several sit-down games played at the party, this is a great way to let the children use some energy before they have to sit down and focus on the other games.

Young children can play the "clue" game as long as the questions are kept to their knowledge of various things surrounding Christmas. The game is played like this: the teacher gives a series of clues about something Christmas related and keeps giving clues until someone shouts out the answer. It might go something like this:

Answer: Santa's sleigh

Clue: I'm thinking of something big

Clue: It helps Santa on Christmas Eve

Clue: It holds a lot of presents

Clue: It's very fast

You keep giving clues until the children figure out the answer. Since these are young children, don't give clues that are too difficult or beyond their knowledge.

Kids love toss games, so why not create a snowball toss game at Frosty's belly? Get or make a large cardboard cutout of Frosty the Snowman and cut a hole in his stomach. You can create snowballs

out of several things. Take plastic bags and put mini marshmallows inside, or use Styrofoam balls. If you use the latter, don't make the children throw the "snowballs" very far since the Styrofoam won't go that far. Have the children stand a distance back from Frosty (you can determine this depending on the age of the children and space you have available) and have them toss the snowballs into Frosty's tummy. First one to get all 3 snowballs in the tummy wins a prize!

Christmas Table Games

If you're getting everyone together for Christmas dinner, you want to provide some fun activities and games in addition to just the meal. Here are some good ideas to keep the crowd in the Christmas mood and keep them busy and diverted until the meal is ready.

Guess the dinner - Have all the people who are not working in the kitchen do a smell test and try to figure out what's on the menu for dinner. Sure, turkey or ham or roast beef might be an obvious choice and an easy one if they are traditional in your family, but what's the potato smell? Is it a hashed brown casserole, or baked potatoes? Are they mashed with sour cream or garlic? Are there brussel sprouts for dinner or squash, or both. The winner, or the person who most closely guesses the items on the menu, gets a taste test.

Board game fun - Bring out the most kid-like board game you have. This might be one that was just opened that morning or something you already have. Get the men in the house (not the boys, but grown men) to sit down on the floor and play the game. A great picture can be had when the fathers and grandfathers are on the living room rug playing Candyland or Chutes and Ladders. Better yet, bring out a princess game and enjoy watching the men get dressed up like princesses as the game goes on. As a secondary activity, pit the kids and dads against each other in a game of monopoly or cards. The kids can play with their dads on a team or the dads can play against the kids. Either way, it's sure to be fun.

Tablecloth - If the children are getting restless waiting for the meal, have them decorate the tablecloth. This isn't the time, then, to put great Aunt Martha's tablecloth on the table, but something inexpensive and yet not disposable. You can keep the tablecloth from year to year and enjoy watching the progression of the children's art through the tablecloth. Be sure to have them use permanent markers and have them date and sign it, if they are old enough. If they're not, date and sign it for them. You'll want that bit of information later.

Outdoor fun - Have a fun game of "toss the hat". Fill Santa's hat with some candy or other small items and try to toss the hat around without the items falling out. You can have a relay with Santa's hat where everyone wears Santa's hat, then hands it to the next person, who has to put it on and then take it off and then hand it to the next person. How about a rousing game of football, where the goal line is made of discarded Christmas ribbon? Or a game of soccer where the soccer ball is a rolled up ball of discarded Christmas paper.

Worst presents - Who has the best story about the worst present they ever got? Before dessert have everyone share their best of the worst stories. Be sure that you don't tell the story in front of the person who gave you the worst present! What was the most interesting present you ever got? Or the best handmade present? What was the best present that came this Christmas? Dessert isn't handed out until everyone shares a story, good or bad.

Where's Santa? - While eating dinner, have a fun activity going on that's sure to delight the children. Using a Santa hat, play a game of "where's Santa"? Surely he's back at the North Pole by now, right? Have someone start with the Santa hat and under the table, that person passes it to someone else. Everyone tries to decide where the hat is. Whoever has the hat (they can keep it in their lap while they eat) winks at someone else when they catch their eye. If someone gets winked at, they say, "Santa's lost!" and this continues, with the passing of the hat and the winking, until someone figures out where Santa is.

Christmas Tree Activities

Decorating the Christmas tree is an event that most members of any family look forward to. It not only is a time to reflect and remember where the various ornaments came from or who made them, it is also an exciting time that really brings Christmas right into the home.

There are a variety of activities you can incorporate into bring the Christmas tree into your home. Some families enjoy singing "Oh Christmas Tree" as the tree is brought into the home. Make a fun activity of this whereby everyone has to come up with an original verse to the song (since few know the actual words). This can keep everyone entertained while someone else works to get the tree standing up straight.

Once the tree is in a stand and ready to be decorated, make a game out of the ornaments. Put all the homemade ornaments aside and work with those first. Start with the first family member and ask them who made the ornament, where did it come from? Once the details are out of the way, ask the crafter (likely a child) if they remember making the ornament. If you're the parent, tell the child what you thought when you first saw the ornament. This is fun, since it reminds children that the things they make and bring home are meaningful to the parents.

There is always one ornament that is just ugly, or plain silly. Play "hot potato" with that ornament. Whoever gets stuck with the ugly ornament has to say one nice thing about it, such as "well, there's a lot of glitter on it and that's pretty", or "Dougie made it, so I like it". It's a silly way to remind children to find good in everything. It might even remind them that things are just things. This is a good lesson for this time of year.

Some people use an advent calendar to count down the days until Christmas, and this is how it's traditionally done, but there is one fun activity sure to be a hit with children. Similar to the concept in Germany (where the advent calendar originated) this involves providing one small gift for children every day until Christmas. In Germany, it's only done for several days before Christmas, but you can do it for the 24 days of the month until Christmas arrives.

Buy tiny handled gift bags at the craft store. Buy 1 for each of your children. Have the children decorate the bags, and on each of the 24 bags, have them place a number as well, 1 through 24. As you decorate the tree, find space for each of these little bags. Because they have handles, they can hang right on the tree like an ornament, or you can tie ribbon on the handles so they have a more graceful swing. Each night, fill the right bag with a tiny prize or gift. So if it's the night of December 14, you'll take bag #15 (all the bags with earlier numbers will be gone) and put some little trinket in it. It might be a piece of candy, a tiny ornament for your child's own tree, a tiny car or small eraser. The idea here is that it's a small gift, but come morning, that's the first activity your children will engage in - discovering what little treat you left for them the night before.

Class Party Halloween Games

If you ask children what their favorite holiday is, the most likely response from most children will be Christmas, with Halloween coming in a close second. Some children will choose Halloween as their first favorite. But this holiday, with all its goblins and ghouls, likely makes the top two favorite holidays on most children's' lists.

To that end, then, it's always fun to have a raucous Halloween class party. With lots of fun games and activities, and plenty of candy for prizes, it's sure to be a hit with kids of all school ages.

For younger children how about a game of pumpkin bowling? Find some of those inexpensive plastic pumpkin treat buckets and stack them up on a hard floor. You can stack them as high as you like, but you have to start with at least three buckets. If you get many buckets, you can make a pyramid out of them. Find some lightweight plastic balls - plastic bowling balls are excellent for this. And let the kids go bowling! The kids love knocking over the pumpkin heads and all the kids who play should get a prize for this game.

Kids of all ages enjoy making mummies out of themselves and their friends. Here's how this works. You bring in toilet paper, lots and lots of toilet paper. Divide the kids into teams of 2. When you begin timing the kids, they must wrap their friend up in the toilet paper, mummy style. The first team who is all wrapped wins. The child who's wrapped up like a mummy can then break out of the toilet paper wrap with a scary "roar" and the game begins again so the other child can also be wrapped. Be sure to play some spooky Halloween music while this game is being played to add to the atmosphere.

Circle time! Have all the kids get in a circle and begin a spooky story. The story can begin with the classic, "It was a dark and spooky night..." and then the person next in the circle continues the story. Each child adds something to the story as it moves around the circle. If the children are young, you can keep the story on the straight and narrow by indicating no gruesome elements will be allowed. If the kids are older, you can decide how scary the story can be. Be aware that children in higher elementary grades will not only like their stories fairly scary and gruesome, but some might even add "booger" and "snot" and "throw up" elements to their story. You can set the rules ahead of time to prepare for this type of storytelling.

No game has held onto children's interests for more years than the classic "musical chairs". This version includes playing Halloween music (think "Monster Mash" or "Thriller" by Michael Jackson) and asking the kids to act as spooky and scary as they can while they race around the chairs. You can up the rules depending on the ages of the children. For example, for children in the lower grades you can tell them to just walk around the chairs until the music stops. As they get older, you can add challenging elements, such as make scary faces as you walk around the chairs, do the monster mash (whatever that means to the individual kid) and other things like that. You're sure to get some creative responses.

Kids love cakewalks, but they aren't practical in the classroom. You could, however, have a treat walk. Save enough space in the classroom for this one. Again, play some Halloween-themed music and have the kids walk around in a circle as they do for cakewalks during other school events. Instead of having them walk onto number squares or circles, however, you can have them walking onto cardboard discs that include pictures of ghosts, monsters and the like. The person running the cakewalk will stop the music and pull a matching picture out of a pumpkin head. Instead of calling "#14", for example, as the winner of the cakewalk, it will be "ghost head" or "monster mouth".

Classroom Thanksgiving Games

If you're planning a Thanksgiving party in the classroom, there are a myriad of games you can have the children play that will be fun but also educational and useful in teaching the concept of being thankful.

Be careful not to overdo the turkey aspect of Thanksgiving. Some children forget that it's about more than the turkey. Playing some fun games can help them remember the purpose of Thanksgiving.

Try a gratitude bag. Fill the bag with several cards, each with something on it. Some will say "Thanksgiving" while others will have a word or picture of other things. Some of those other things might be cars, food, clothes, etc. Have the children sit in a circle and draw a card out of the bag. If they get a card that has a picture or word on it other than "Thanksgiving" they should talk about why they are thankful for that item and why others should be as well.

For example, if the child choose "shoes", they might express how thankful they are that they have shoes so their feet stay clean and they don't get cold in the winter and they stay unharmed when they are walking. Depending on the ages of the children, this might be a simple response or something a little more involved once they understand the concept better. If they draw the "car" card, they might comment on how nice it is to have a car and not have to take the bus, or how nice it is that their mom can pick them up from school so they don't have to walk home everyday. With help from the teacher or a parent, they might even note that in many parts of the world, people don't have cars (or shoes) and that they are lucky to have all these things.

If the child chooses a card that says "Thanksgiving" they should come up with an original idea about something they are thankful for. Try to steer them away from things like "Playstation" but instead steer them toward things like "my parents" and "my house and my room".

For some thinking fun, have kids do a word find with Thanksgiving words. Provide them with a list of words related to Thanksgiving. They might be "Thanksgiving", "Cornucopia", "Mayflower", "Turkey", etc. Then they must find words contained in those words. So, if the word is "Mayflower", they might find words like "lay", "flower", "flow" and the like. "Thanksgiving" might turn into "thank", "sing", and "an". See which child can find the most words in the list of words you provide them. Try to challenge the kids to find words within the words that relate back to Thanksgiving.

The old memory game is always fun and can be used for Thanksgiving too. Have the children sit in a circle and have someone start the game by saying, "At Thanksgiving, I like to eat" and then finish it with one food item. So that child might say, "At Thanksgiving, I like to eat turkey", and the next child will say, "At Thanksgiving, I like to eat turkey and cranberry sauce." The next child would continue with, "At Thanksgiving, I like to eat turkey and cranberry sauce and green beans." Each child will carry on until the list becomes so long, someone is sure to forget an item. You can either star the game over or keep going until everyone is out but one child.

Dress Santa Game

If you are willing to put a little time and energy into a Christmas game, this one is surefire hit. It's called "dress Santa" and it's funny and silly and worth having a camera round to record the fun. You might even want a camcorder as well.

Here's how it works. Create a dress-up box with a Santa costume and other items that Santa might or might not wear. You want to have a full-bore Santa costume, so you can either rent one or purchase one if you think it will get used years after. They can be found for around \$100 or maybe a little less if you buy one at a costume shop that's used.

You'll put the Santa suit in a large suitcase or trunk. Be sure you have as many Santa items as possible; for example, you want to have a pair of boots, gloves, a big belt, etc. Then in the trunk or suitcase, mix in other items, like jewelry, hats, socks, shoes and feather boas. It's probably obvious where this is going.

At the Christmas party, someone volunteers to play the game. Ideally, you'll have several volunteers so you can time people and award a prize for fastest or most interesting, or whatever works based for your party.

The chosen person gets blindfolded and stripped down to their bare essentials. No, it's not that kind of game, but if a woman is wearing a sweater over a T-shirt and shoes, the shoes and the sweater can be removed, so she has less on her to begin with. Once the person is blindfolded, begin timing them. Tell them they must dress Santa as quickly as possible in his Santa suit only, nothing else. To spice up the game and make it more interesting, be sure to include some items in the trunk that might feel like Santa items, but aren't. For example, you'll have Santa's black gloves in the trunk, but also include a pair or two of garden gloves, and Santa has a belt, but you could include other belts as well. Be sure to include several hats (even a princess hat, which might feel like a Santa hat to a disoriented participant).

Once Santa is dressed, stop the timer and take the blindfold off. Everyone can get a good laugh at the result. Santa might have his suit on, but he might also be wearing a robe. Or he might be in his suit, but with garden gloves, a rhinestone belt and a princess hat. Be sure to take pictures of your good sport and move to the next participant. It's better if the other players aren't in the room, since many might remember the various items in the trunk and make mental notes about what to ignore and what to use.

After the Santas are done with their dressing and the requisite pictures have been taken, decide on a winner. Is the winner the Santa who dressed in 45 seconds, or the one that wore the garden gloves, princess hat and rhinestone belt combination? It's a tough call, but a winner must be crowned, so to speak. You can award prizes (Santa hats filled with candy are fun) or you can keep this all in fun and let the good sports know the fun is in the silly playing.

Family Christmas Gift Exchange Games

It used to be that families had no rules about gift buying. Everyone bought for everyone else, and gifts were exchanged when the family all got together somewhere during the Christmas season.

These days, it's more common for people to draw a name out of a hat or get assigned a person to buy for. Or the family creates a type of "white elephant" exchange instead of having family members buy for individuals in particular. So, what many families need is a fun way to exchange the gifts, whether they be for a specific person or whether they are 'white elephant' type gifts.

If the family members drew names, there are several fun things you can do. The gifts can be hidden and clues given as to the location of the gifts. So, if you arrive at grandma's house with your gift for Aunt Martha, you might tuck her gift into a kitchen cabinet. Then you'd create a series of clue as to here it is. You might say, "Cinnamon lurks here" or "it's the hub of the home, but not always the home of the hub".

The clues can be silly or deadly serious. They can be designed so someone will know where to find their present in just minutes, or designed so that it takes a series of clues to get someone right to their gift. If the group is small or the house particularly large, and the participants have the time you can always create a hunt where more than one tip is left and one tip leads to another, which leads to another until the gift is finally found.

Why should the kids have all the fun? Create some fun gift exchange ideas for adults. Whether the family is doing a name draw and exchanging regular gifts or not, you can have some good family fun with a white elephant gift exchange. How about a themed white elephant gift exchange? If the family is into fishing, you could create that as a theme. Everyone must bring a gift related to fishing (this could be anything from sporting goods items, to a singing bass that goes on the wall). It could be a hand held electronic fishing game or a board game with fishing as a theme.

In that same vein, you could create a "cooking" white elephant exchange or a camping themed gift exchange. Again, it's more about what will please members of the family than anything. Then create some fun games for the exchange itself. Perhaps everyone draws a number and gets to pick their gifts from the pile in the middle based on their number. Perhaps you begin the game that way, but then also people to 'steal' someone else's gift if they choose.

You can require that the gift recipient shakes a gift, studies a gift and makes a good, educated guess as to its contents before opening it. If they are right, they can "steal" someone else's gift, but if they are wrong, they keep theirs. Add to the silliness factor by playing a card game and dictating that people can't get their gift and open it until they win a hand in the card game (ideally something fairly quick like poker or rummy).

The idea behind any family gift exchange should be enjoying each other's company and enjoying the Christmas spirit. As long as it's fun and engaging, there's no reason why the adults in the family can't have some fun games for exchanging gifts just the kids might.

Family Fun Christmas Activities

Family is at the core of the Christmas season, so creating fun memories with your family is always at the top of the must-do list this time of year.

What fun activities can you incorporate into your family life that makes Christmas memorable and fun? Plenty, really. There are the traditional and the things a little bit out of the box.

Think back to your childhood and Christmas time in your house. Are there particular memories that are clearer than others? Those are likely the traditions your parents created for you and your siblings. Trying to create traditions in your own home with your own children is one way to make Christmas fun, exciting and memorable. Perhaps it's decorating cookies, or making gingerbread houses. Maybe when you were younger your mom always had something yummy smelling coming from the kitchen. You can create the same tradition by simply keeping potpourri warmed and smelling nice, if you don't have the time to bake frequently.

If you want to do a fun family activity in the kitchen, but baking's not your thing, you can make a variety of other gift items in your kitchen. The kids love making chocolate and candy covered pretzel sticks, and you can pair those with homemade hot cocoa mix to give as gifts.

Be sure to incorporate music into your family's traditions. How about some family fun singing Christmas carols or creating your own family music CD? Record your family singing Christmas carols and use that CD as your music CD for the holidays. If you all are particularly talented, you could make these look pretty and give them as gifts.

Many families like to cut down their own Christmas tree. This is a really fun family activity that can add a lot to the Christmas season. Christmas tree farms are located just about everywhere. Check into a local grower's group for locations. You simply show up, grab a saw (this is mom or dad's job) and go hunting. Depending on the location of the tree farm, you might walk only a short distance, or you might have to hike up and down hills and far into the farm's reaches to find just the right tree.

To add even more fun to this activity, create another family tradition that will annually go with the tree cutting. It can be as simple as also having lunch (at the same place each year) and picking up candy to eat in the car on the way home. You might also add a shopping excursion to the day; after the tree is safe at home in a bucket of water, you might all go shopping as a family for some new ornaments.

Other fun family activities can include annual visits to certain places in your community. Does your town have an annual "Christmas tree lane" where all the homes on one street decorate (sometimes in an over the top fashion) for the holidays? You can make a tradition of driving down the street each year, or walking the entire street, if the weather allows. Walking gives the kids a chance to see some of the details of the various décor items.

Many children think hot cocoa is an essential part of the Christmas season. If that's the case with yours, you could start a fun family activity each year where you make a big batch of hot cocoa mix at the start of the season. Let the kids have a small cup each night before bed during the month of December and closer to Christmas, add special items to the hot cocoa, like mini marshmallows one night and whipped cream another. Be sure to leave this family-made hot cocoa for Santa on Christmas Eve!

At a certain age, children enjoy decorating their room for the holidays. One fun family Christmas

activity is to encourage this decoration by letting the kids shop for items to put in their rooms and letting them do the decorating. Be sure to take a picture of them in their decorated room each year. They'll enjoy looking at the pictures year after year.

Family Thanksgiving Activities

If you're hosting a family thanksgiving, you want to create a fun family environment that helps children understand the importance of thankfulness and reminds the adults of this as well.

Since Thanksgiving comes just before what many refer to as the "greedy" season, activities designed to remind people of the bounty in their lives are useful. For example, you might help children understand that while they don't have everything they want, they do have everything they need.

How do you do this? Several ways. One is to help children create a cornucopia, which will sit on the Thanksgiving table. There are a variety of ways to do this. You can make a papier-mâché cornucopia using a balloon as the base to help you get the shape started. You can simply take large piece of poster board and shape them into a cone and fill those with whatever you like. As an extra activity, you can have the children decorate the cornucopia before it gets filled.

Since the idea of the cornucopia is to celebrate a bounty and appreciate that bounty, you can fill it as is traditionally done with squash, corn and the like. You might also ask each member of the family to bring something that represents their personal bounty in life. A new mom might bring a baby blanket to put in the cornucopia while a newly retired grandpa might add a picture of his family, since that's what's most important to him. You can discuss the items in the cornucopia basket at the dinner table while enjoying your Thanksgiving feast.

Another family activity that kids like is the thankfulness jar. When each person arrives at dinner, they place a note with something they are thankful for in the jar. Ideally, each person will add more than one item to the jar. At dinner, someone (ideally, the matriarch of patriarch of the family) reads the notes. Everyone tries to figure out who wrote which note. The items can range from the serious (someone who struggled with an illness in the previous year might be thankful for life, quite simply) to the silly (the new mom might be thankful there's a Starbucks within 5 minutes of her home). Kids enjoy adding their own touches to the thankfulness jar and their responses are often a surprise to the adult family members.

Some families have several tables set about at Thanksgiving. Many people buy professional floral arrangements to decorate the tables. You can make a game out of it to figure out who's going to get to bring home the table arrangement to their home. You can do the old wedding thing and simply put a number on the bottom of the centerpiece and have someone's chair match that number or you can make a game and perhaps create a trivia game out of Thanksgiving facts. For example, questions might look like this:

- *How many turkeys are cooked on Thanksgiving throughout the US?
- *Why are turkeys called turkeys?
- *Which president set aside the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving?

Be sure you research and know the answers and then quiz everyone. This is a great way to pass the time while everyone is waiting for the feast to be ready. Just tell the winners they can't take the centerpieces until dinner is over!

You can have a similar game before dessert. Create a family trivia game and quiz family members before dessert. Only the people who get the answers right get to have their dessert. Everyone else has to keep trying until they get their trivia question right. Questions can range from the silly to the sublime. They might look something like this:

- *Who got popcorn stuck in her braces at 12?
- *Which man here wore boots with big holes in them until he was 20 and could buy his own?

*Whose grandparents immigrated to the US from Ireland?

*Which boy here got suspended from school for riding his bike into the classroom?

Fun Office Christmas Activities

Just because you're stuck in an office all day doesn't mean Christmas fun can't extend to your workplace. Depending on the environment at your work, it's definitely possible to mix holiday fun with work.

One obvious choice for some fun at the office during the holidays is to have a party. You could have several, in fact. How about a cookie exchange party? Plan to do this at lunchtime one day, and during that block of time, everyone brings several dozen cookies they have made. You have to set a particular number of cookies everyone brings. Because once everyone has an empty plate, they go around the table picking up cookies that look good to them and place them on their empty paper plate. If everyone brought 3 dozen cookies, say, then everyone gets to take home 3 dozen cookies. This is not a particularly unique idea, but one that brings a bit of fun into the workplace.

Keeping in mind whether or not the public visits your workplace, you might choose to decorate. Why not have a Christmas tree decorating event? Everyone brings 6 ornaments and as a group activity, everyone decorates the tree. This is a good way to build team spirit and decorate your workplace at the same time.

Don't forget to institute a "secret Santa" event at work, where you secretly buy gifts for someone and have some type of gift exchange. But what about a "Santa's helper" activity? Someone in the group has to begin this on the sly. Essentially, this first person (the only one in the know about how the whole thing began) puts together a little gift. Ideally, it's a basket with a few gift items in it. They might be decorative items, or baked goods or even bath items. Attach a card saying that "Santa's helper" dropped by and brought these items. Now the person who received the "helper's" gift must put together a little something for someone else and - again on the sly - deliver it to the next person. It continues until everyone has received a visit from "Santa's helper".

Nothing brings people together like a group activity designed to help others. What if your officemates came up with an activity designed to help people less fortunate at the holidays? You might adopt a local family and everyone in the office purchases items for that family. You might choose to purchase Christmas trees for needy families. If the public visits your office often, you might even begin a "sharing" tree and people can bring items to put under the tree for needy families or children. As a group activity, the office workers can then deliver these items to the needy.

The particularly festive office might want to have someone come in and do a cooking demonstration. If there are enough people interested, you can hire a cook or baker to come into your office on your lunch hour and do a demonstration or class. Say you want to bake but don't know what to bake this year. A baker can come in and demonstrate cookies or other goodies you might not have thought to make. Or someone can come in with ideas and samples for the perfect Christmas meal. These ideas are perfect for the environment where people work many hours and are quite busy but still want to do their regular cooking and baking each year.

Fun Office Gift Exchange Games

There are dozens of fun office gift exchange games people can play during the Christmas season. Officemates might have a "secret Santa" gift exchange or a popular "white elephant" gift exchange. All are popular and always fun, provided the rules are clear and everyone understands them.

One of the most popular office games involving Christmas gifts is the "white elephant" gift exchange. The rules can vary depending on the office and participants, but generally it works something like this. Each person participating purchases a gift not to exceed a certain dollar amount (determined in advance and might range from \$5 to \$20, again depending on the group). The object here is a fun gift, so anything particularly practical is not welcome. You're looking for unusual and interesting, perhaps funny, and something other people will want.

Everyone who's participating in the exchange gets a number (the number should be the same as the number of presents). The numbers should be they drawn out of a hat or something else (perhaps a Santa hat, in recognition of the season?). So, the person who draws number "1" goes first and picks a present. They open it and keep it. The second person can either pick a different present or they can "steal" the first present. They can't open a present until they are sure they are keeping their choice and not picking the first gift. This continues until everyone has a present. Any present that's been opened can be subject to stealing, but a gift can only be stolen three times.

At the end of the game, the person who was the first to open a present can steal a gift if they choose, since they didn't have an opportunity earlier.

In this game there's always one gift that everyone wants and will steal over and over again. What makes it fun is trying to figure out who is going to get the most coveted gift. In some cases, people can end up with the gift they brought.

Originally the "white elephant" gift exchange was a way for people to "regift" or give someone a gift they themselves received and don't want. For a fun twist, you could ask people to bring something from their home like that, or you can require they purchase something (with the aforementioned limit on spending).

There are many varieties of the Secret Santa game, which is so popular in offices, but one option that's fun involves putting a dollar limit on the purchase and having participants actually make "Santa lists". Here's how it works: Those participating create a little list for "Santa". There should also be a dollar limit placed on this gift exchange, so if that is \$10, then people should only list items on their Santa list that can be purchased for \$10 or less.

Everyone who is participating draws a list out of a hat, or some other object, and sets about shopping for that person. They know who they are shopping for, but the recipient doesn't. On exchange day, the Secret Santas must deliver the gifts to their officemates' desks without being seen. Those participating can decide if they want people to sign the cards attached to the gifts, or if the secret should stay a secret. If they choose the latter, gift giving can be interesting, since it's anonymous, but many people choose to have cards signed so in the end, people who to thank for their gifts.

Office Activities Valentines Day

Working might not seem like all fun and games, but sometimes you have to be silly and make work fun. Valentine's Day is a time to do just that. There are many activities you can incorporate into the work world. If your office is particularly close-knit, that opens the door to even more activities.

Start with the basics. Valentine's Day is all about the chocolate. Buy a big glass jar with a lid and make clear this chocolate is not for eating (a big sign on the front might help make this clear). Have everyone guess how many items are in the jar. You can fill it with just about anything, but Hershey's Kisses seem to make the most sense. You can fill with a mix of Kisses (hugs, regular, etc) or with just the classic chocolate kiss. In any event, have people guess how many kisses are in the jar. Their guesses should be written on a slip of paper and put into a box near the jar. The winner gets the jar of kisses on Valentine's Day. If your office is a bit more generous, a small dinner gift certificate could accompany the jar.

Another fun idea is V-day bingo. Create Bingo cards with various Valentine's Day pictures on them. There might a heart, a cupid, a couple kissing, and so on. These are clip art pieces that can easily be printed off the computer. Each day, someone will call out a square. It might be "HEART!" or "KISSING!" and everyone marks their bingo card. Start the game perhaps 3 weeks or so before Valentine's Day so someone has a chance to win before Valentine's Day. This is something that will take literally 30 seconds a day but will be fun and is sure to create some silly tension. The winner gets a prize. Perhaps free lunch in the company lunchroom, or a kiss from the boss, or something else silly.

If you have a few cooks in your office, you can suggest a "heart a day". Each day, someone must bring in something shaped like a heart, a food item, that is. One day it could be cookies, and another pancakes. A truly original thinker might figure out how to bring a heart-shaped lasagna or something else. Perhaps little finger sandwiches cut into heart shapes. To make this extra entertaining and challenging, you could require that the foods actually be good for your heart (therefore, cookies might be out, but heart-shaped chocolates? In.).

Often officemates become more like family. Why not use the holiday of love to share your memories of your own loves? Have everyone write a quick story of how they met their wife or husband and put it in a jar. They shouldn't include names and shouldn't identify their spouse either. One day at lunch, when everyone is sitting together (this could be at a Valentine's Day lunch with your homemade goodies), read the stories and have everyone try to guess which one belongs to which office friend. Some of the stories might make you think it actually happened to someone else. Some of the stories are surprising and sometimes even funny,

Since email is often the communication of choice in offices, have some fun with a Valentine's Day email quiz. You can ask historical questions about the holiday or questions about co-workers. Some questions might look like this:

1. Who married their spouse in Yosemite National Park?
2. What does the word Valentine mean?
3. Which of the following animals mate for life? (You'll want to provide multiple choice answers for this one, of course.)

Pin The Beard On Santa Game

When it comes to silly party games, it seems unfair that birthdays get all the attention and Christmas none. It's time to bring back some silly party games for Christmas, and "Pin the beard on Santa" is as good a place to start as any.

To begin this game, you need a cardboard cutout of Santa. This can be purchased at some party stores, or even little gift shops. It doesn't have to be large, but it should be a big face of Santa. You can also find these at educational supply stores, or teacher supply stores, in the section of other cardboard decoration items that teachers put on classroom walls.

Once you get Santa's face home, cut off his beard. That's right, cut it clean off. There's no point in pinning Santa's beard on him if it's already there, right? The beard you sliced off can either be thrown away or keep it to tape back up later, if you want to use Santa's face for another game or as decoration.

Now, you can create several beards out of different items. It's easy to take a piece of thick cardstock and cut the beard out of that, or you can use foam with adhesive backing. You can simply peel the backing off right before it's used. You could also make the beard out of crumpled white paper, simply computer paper or the like. If you want to get a bit more elaborate, create Santa's beard out of cotton balls or a large piece of cotton pulled and shaped into the semblance of a beard.

If you have 5 people playing this game, you'll need 5 beards. 10 people? 10 beards. You get the idea.

You play "pin the beard on Santa" exactly as you play "pin the tale on the donkey" and similar games. Spin the person around, make sure they are blindfolded and then have them try to replace Santa's lost beard. Self-adhesive foam works well because once they place it on the picture of Santa, it's not going to move, so they can't change their blindfolded mind and change the position once they pick a position. It's there for the duration.

No, you can add several variations to this game. For example, you can buy a full-size cardboard Santa (again, the party stores often have these, or school supply stores, or you can make one of your own without much effort). You might have people pin the boots on Santa, pin the hat on Santa, or pin a red button nose on Santa.

One fun (adult) version of this game is to pin the chest hair on Santa. Create a fun cardboard Santa with his suit unbuttoned. It's a big macho for Santa, but also a bit fun. Then fashion "chest hair" out of yarn, threads or fake fur. Attach some sort of adhesive to the back (foam stickers work, or heavy-duty double-stick tape) and have people try and pin the chest hair on Santa the same way they attached his beard or might attach his boots.

Any good game offers a prize for the winner, and this one is no exception. You could always offer Santa to the winning "pinner" or you could have something more elaborate like a Santa goodie bag, filled with Santa pencils, Santa erasers, a Santa coffee mug, and Santa-themed candy.

Scary Halloween Classroom Games

Most children love all things Halloween. As adults, we assume it's because Halloween means candy and children generally love candy. But many children love more than just the abundance of candy at Halloween time. They really get into the ghoulish aspect of the holiday and delight in the displays of goopy brains and squishy body parts.

Halloween games, therefore, can be really fun and goopy, if you wish. The kids will go with it, don't worry.

First up, a brain game. There's a fun game on store shelves where you pick through a rubber "brain" to figure out what's in it. You can create this easily yourself. Make some jello and fill it with a variety of items, like gummy worms and other gummy candies, some small candy and trinkets and other items. Tell the children to root around in the bowl of jello (call it a "brain" if this will get the kids more interested) to figure out what's in it. It's goopy and messy and kids love it. Best yet, color the jello black so it's too dark to see what's inside and it looks more like goopy brain matter (the way kids see it, anyway).

In that same, or similar vein, kids love the spaghetti game. Be sure they are wearing a smock over their clothes or are wearing play clothes before playing this game. Make a big bowl of spaghetti and fill it with all kinds of items, like plastic bugs, gummy worms and other items that might feel a bit strange. Make the children feel around in the bowl of spaghetti and identify the items they feel. Once they are done and cleaned up, have them list as many items as they can remember. Whoever gets the most items listed (and right) gets a prize. Spaghetti, anyone?

Another similar game that's always popular is to take a cardboard box and paint it black, both the inside and outside. Carve a small hole in the top, really just large enough for the children to get their hands into, and fill the box with a variety of items. They can be related to Halloween (like a small pumpkin) or not (wrapped Tootsie rolls or a tiny toy Hummer car). Have the children guess what's inside the box and award the box itself to the child who guesses the most number of items correctly. To make this goopy and silly, be sure to include some items that might feel like body parts or brain matter.

Kids love creating silly fictional stories, often with absurd plotlines. Halloween is the optimum time to let them run wild with their imaginations. Have them spend a bit of time writing out the scariest story they can think of. Some children might need some direction not to make it ridiculously grotesque, so use caution with these children in your clarification of this assignment. Once the stories are written, have the children hand them in and then have a guest reader for each one of them. Each child will come to the front of the class and read the story with as much dramatization as they can muster. Once the story is read, everyone has to guess who wrote the story. The writer should play along, otherwise everyone will know it was their story! The winner is the child who wrote a story so intriguing and unusual that nobody knew it was his or hers!

Kids love the word find games when you give them a word or words relating to a holiday or something else and have them find words within those words. In this case, give them Halloween-related words and ask them to find as many scary words as they can. For example, you might give them the word "Halloween" and see how many scary words they can make from the letters. Or you could give them a series of words and let them rearrange the letters in all of the words to create scary words, or even create a story from the scary words. Put a time limit on this game and award a prize for the child who creates the most words in the least amount of time.

School Christmas Gift Exchange Games

Many public schools don't allow gift exchanges during the Christmas season, but some do and certainly many private schools do. Many fun games can be created to make the gift exchange really fun and festive for kids.

There are several activities you can impose to make the gift buying interesting. For example, you can declare that one of the rules of the gift exchange is that gifts must be handmade or put together in some way and not purchased. You can take this a step further by declaring that the gifts feature the school's colors in abundance. Perhaps they might also somehow incorporate the school's mascot.

Definitely in a gift exchange with children, there should be a low dollar limit on the gifts (such as \$5).

But once the gifts are ready, there are many fun exchange activities and games that can be used to make this even fun and memorable for the kids.

You can use a "white elephant" gift exchange method; here the kids draw a number and choose their gift from the pile of gifts in order by the number they drew. They can exchange their gift for a different one if they choose. A gift can only be "stolen" three times and the person who drew the first gift can "steal" a gift at the end of the gift exchange if they like. Kids always get a kick out of the "stealing" aspect of the white elephant gift exchange.

Children enjoy buying gifts for other people, so having them draw names is an excellent activity for a gift exchange. To add a twist, make the gift activity interesting by telling the children they can't tell their recipient they are buying for them. Then create a fun activity during the exchange itself to play up the "mystery" element of the gift exchange.

In the mystery scenario, you can have each child open their gift, then try and figure out who it is from. If the children were asked to make a gift, this can be particularly fun, as some children might have drawing skills, or woodworking skills which might make it easier or harder for the other children to decide who have them a gift.

As the children open the gifts, have them guess who the gift is from. If they are wrong, they have to do a little dance or silly physical act before making another guess. This repeats until they guess the right giver of the gift they have been given.

Another fun activity for gift giving among children in a classroom is to have each child make a game piece for an unknown game board. Everyone brings a handcrafted game piece (there can be rules as to its size, for example, no larger than 2 inches high), to play with on the communal game board.

The "game board" can be nothing more than a large rug that's been fashioned into some sort of game, ideally a Christmas-themed game. Always popular is "get Santa back to the North Pole" played much like Chutes and Ladders or Candyland. Since most children know how to play these games, the learning curve is small and at the Christmas party, they can get to playing right away. To keep with the gift exchange idea, each child can be asked to bring their handcrafted game piece wrapped and the pieces can be exchanged as gifts before everyone plays on the big game board.

Valentines Day Activites For Families

It's important for families to show their love for one another, so what better time than Valentine's Day to play some game, engage in some fun activities, all designed to show each other love and support?

One fun activity is all about giving each other "snaps" for being who they are. Over the course of the year, mom and dad, and the kids as well, can add "snaps" to a special jar or containers. These "snaps" might include things like "dad helped me build my pinewood derby car" or "Joey read books to his sister each night without complaint". Read these little slips of good things, thank each other for caring and empty the jar to start it again for another year.

At dinner on Valentine's night, have each family member tell others why they love them. What about dad made mom love him? Why does Joey love his sister? What about sissy is special to dad? It might seem a little corny at first, but in the end, everyone will enjoy hearing wonderful, positive things about themselves.

One fun family game involves family trivia. This game is particularly fun if the children are a bit older and there are at least 2 children in the family. Mom (or dad) creates a trivia game that looks something like this: there will be a series of index cards with a bit of family trivia on each card. Someone draws a card and tries to answer the question correctly. If correct, they get a point. The person with the most points at the end of the game gets a prize or extra chocolate syrup on their dessert. Some questions might be things like this:

- *Which one of us suffered a broken leg at the age of 8?
- *Which of us, at the age of 3, flushed an entire box of Tide down the toilet?
- *Which of us snuck into mom and dad's room every night until he or she was 6 years old?

At a certain age, children begin to enjoy preparing meals for mom and dad. For a fun Valentine's activity, the children could be asked to prepare a meal for mom and dad. Ideally, this would be breakfast in bed and could include foods that are traditional "romantic" foods (like strawberries and chocolate) or whatever the kids want to make. They might even like to prepare a special Valentine's Day menu and let mom and dad choose off the menu. This would be a fun tradition to start as an annual event on Valentine's Day.

Consider a fun family game of "hidden hearts". In this game, children are given clues to find chocolate hearts hidden around the house. The clues can be easy or more complicated to figure out depending on the ages of the children. If one or more children are very young, mom and dad can help them with the clues. When they find the hearts, they can eat them, but mom or dad, remember where you hid the hearts and be sure to count how many are found, so there aren't any left to get ugly in the house!

Finally, a fun family activity around Valentine's Day is to make cards for other people. Have the kids make handprint cards for the grandparents or have the kids make cards for their friends. Handmade cards can be so much more meaningful than the store-bought kind and kids learn a lot from the experience of putting their hearts (literally) into making the card for others.

Valentines Day Game Ideas For Adults

Planning an adult Valentine's Day party is a bit of a no-brainer. Invite a lot of couples, have a few drinks, decorate with red. Done, right? Yes, and no. You want to put a little more thought into it than that and it's good to have some games to keep things lively. If you are inviting several couples, there are many fun activities you can plan.

First, how about the "what's this item" game? Fill a paper bag with a variety of new undergarments. These should be both men's and women's garments and can include anything from a bra to a lace teddy to a jock strap. Each couple feels around in the bag (not on the outside, as this one requires hands-on effort) and makes a list of what they think is in the bag. You can tell people how many items are in the bag, but that's it. So you might say, there are 10 items in the bag; what are they?

Once all the lists are made, pour the bag's contents out on a table. Let everyone go through the items and see who has the most number of items right. The winning couple gets, you guessed it, the bag of goodies.

You can create a drinking game at the party that requires you take a drink whenever someone kisses you. The kiss can be from the other gender or the same sex, and anytime anyone kisses you anywhere, you have to take a drink or your drink, or to really get things going, from a shot glass.

Create a dartboard with balloons. Cut cardboard into a heart shape and staple red balloons (inflated) to the dartboard and let people take a shot at breaking a heart. Be sure to have plenty of inflated balloons on hand to replace the ones that get broken.

If your party involves a meal, make it a potluck and make it interesting. Tell everyone that the food they bring must be red. Whatever it is, it must be red. This can create some interesting dishes. Certainly, someone can bring lasagna or someone else can bring red velvet cake. And you'll always get someone who takes this opportunity to make jello. What about a salad? That must be radicchio. Or someone could bring strawberries for desert. Assign someone the task of bringing the bread and see what happens.

For a little fun event, consider a scavenger hunt where your guests must head out into the neighborhood or on the town for many Valentine's Day items. Your list might include things like: a bag of Hershey's Kisses, a red heart-shaped Mylar balloon, one red rose, a stuffed Cupid, or a kid's Valentine card. You can send the couples out as teams, or pit the men against the women. Be sure to include something that requires photo proof, like "kiss one stranger on the arm" or "give love advice to a complete stranger".

If your partygoers all know each other well, it's OK to play a simple game of "truth or dare". You might impose rules on the game, such as all the "truth" questions must originate from the college years (particularly fun if this group of friends met in college) or must be about the current spouse. Keep the "dare" challenges clean if you think your group would prefer that or by all means, keep them racy, if that's fun too.

Valentines Day Games For Preschoolers

If you are planning a Valentine's Day party for children, games are essential. Here are some games appropriate for the preschool crowd.

Preschool-age children love to fish. You can create a fishing game with small toy fishing poles and hearts (as fish). Use an empty plastic tub as your "lake" and put into it red hearts cut out of construction paper or cardstock. Each heart is good for a prize. One might be good for a Hershey's kiss, or other small candy, another might be for a small plastic heart. Put magnets on the cardstock hearts and a magnet on the fishing pole. Then the kids can "fish" for hearts and win a prize at the same time. Each child should only be allowed to "catch" one fish each.

Preschoolers love balloons and you can create a heart target for them to aim their balloons at. Create a target out of cardboard or heavy cardstock and put it on the floor somewhere. You might want to have several targets on the floor. Give the kids balloons that have been blown up but aren't tied shut. Let them let go of the balloons in the direction of the target and see where their balloon lands. Be forewarned: kids will want to play this over and over again. So either have plenty of balloons ready to go (perhaps held closed with a clothespin) or have plenty of adults around who want to blow up balloon after balloon. You can also play a similar game by putting a heart target into a box or laundry basket and having the children try to hit the target with an inflated balloon. Be sure to provide prizes for everyone!

Preschool age children love a good game of "Duck Duck Goose" or "Simon Says". For Valentine's Day, you can put a twist on these classic games. Have the kids play a game of "Cupid, Cupid, Love" instead of "Duck, Duck, Goose" or have them play "Cupid Says" instead of "Simon Says". Be sure to add a smooch at the end of each order in "Cupid Says" or have the kids incorporate Valentine's Day activities, like "Cupid says, give your neighbor a hug".

This is a game young children love. Have them "throw smiles" at each other. Sit them in a circle and show them how the game will work. Only one person in the group will smile first. He or she will smile wildly and widely for the whole group. The rest of the group will not smile, not even a little tiny smirk. Once the smiling person is done, they will literally "wipe" the smile off their face and pass it to the next person in the group, who will repeat the wide smile and hope nobody laughs. The kids that laugh or smile are out of the game (those who should be stone-faced anyway). The game can continue until only one stone-faced person is left. Be sure to provide every child with a fun prize just for trying.

Preschool teachers might want to encourage creative thinking with a little game of "Valentine's 20 questions". The teacher can have a visual in mind, which might be a heart, or Cupid, or a card or something relative to the holiday. The teacher says "I'm thinking..." and the children must ask questions about what the teacher is thinking. The teacher can give tiny clues along the way especially if he or she is losing the interest of the younger children in the group. Whoever figures out what the teacher is thinking can be the next one to begin the next round of 20 questions. Be sure to ask the child what they are thinking before the next round begins or it could go on longer than it needs to!

Children love "pin the tale on the donkey" so why not "pin the heart on Cupid"? In this game, simply provide each child with a big red heart with his or her name on it. Have a big cutout of Cupid on a wall and blindfold each child, spin him or her around and have them stick their heart on Cupid (there should be adhesive of some sort on the back of the heart). Once everyone has stuck their hearts, let them look at where they ended up.

Valentines Day Party Games For Elementary Kids

If you are planning a Valentine's Day party for children, games are essential. Here are some games appropriate for the elementary-age crowd.

Bring in two large stuffed hearts (either pillows or just plush stuffed hearts). Divide the kids into two teams and tell them they must run to the finish line with the heart between their legs. So they won't run as much as stumbled forth. Once they return to the group, they should take the heart and give it to the next child, who puts it between their legs and so on. Whichever group finishes the entire relay first wins.

Give the children a couple rolls of toilet paper and instruct them to wrap another child mummy style. This is a popular game at Halloween, but in this case they are wrapping a present. Divide the kids into two teams and time them. The team that finishes first, wins, and gets to put a big red bow on their "package".

Help elementary students remember some of the great couples by having them complete the match to a famous other half. For example, if you say "Romeo" their answer would be "Juliet" (hopefully). To play this game, divide the kids into two groups and give each a buzzer or similar type item. Present the famous start of the pair. You might say, "peanut butter" and if one of the teams knows the match is "jelly" they will buzz in with their answer.

Some other options are:

"Eggs and (bacon)"

"Coffee and (sugar or cream is OK here)"

"Cinderella and (Prince Charming)"

"Cookies and (milk)"

Kids love those little Valentine's candy conversation hearts available everywhere around Valentine's Day. Create a heart-stacking contest, which is a lot of fun and can create some team spirit. Initially, each child will get many hearts. Plan to have a few bags on hand if you are doing this game with a classroom full of kids. Have them build as high as they can with the hearts within in a given period of time (30 seconds to a minute is plenty). If their contraption falls, they are out. Keep playing the game over and over again until you are down to two final contestants. Have everyone cheer him or her on as they try to build the highest (and longest lasting) tower of hearts. Be sure to have a prize for the winning architect.

This game is always a hit with kids because what kid doesn't love a good balloon? Give each child a balloon (not inflated) and have him or her blow it up. Have a target somewhere in the room, and in this case a big heart will do, and have them let go of their (untied) balloon in the direction of the target. Whoever gets their balloon the closest to the target gets a prize. If someone gets a direct hit, that's two prizes. Keep the target on the ground to make this game easier. Based on the ages and abilities of the kids in the group, you can have them stand close or somewhat far away from the target when they let their balloon go.

All kids love a good game of Bingo. For a seated game that might help the kids rest for a minute, play a game of Valentine's Day-themed bingo. The bingo squares might have pictures on them like hearts, flowers, cupid, arrows and the like. Be sure to have a prize for the winner, and play the game over and over so the kids can all have a turn at winning.

To make everyone happy on this day of love, play a game of "throwing the smile". Sit everyone in a circle and have one person smile wildly at the rest of the group. Everyone else must sit as stone-faced as possible. Then the person smiling dramatically wipes the smile off their face (by literally using their hand over their mouth in a swiping motion) and "throws" the smile to the next person in the circle. That person puts the smile on, and again makes a wild, silly smile at the group, then wipes it off and moves on. As soon as someone smirks or smiles that is not supposed to be smiling at that moment, they are out. It's harder than it sounds and kids often end up in gales of laughter, even when they're trying to be serious.