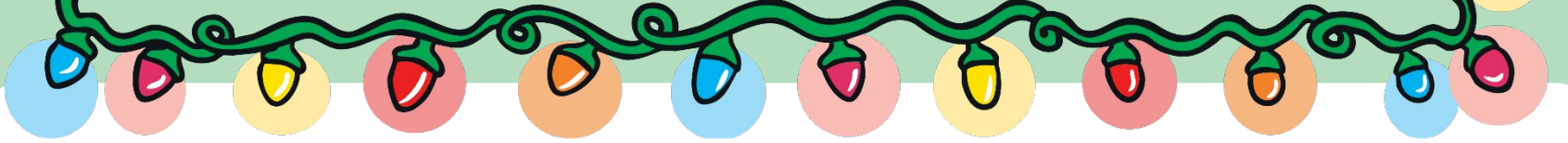


Christmas Facts Advent Calendar





17	23	2	24	10	5
6	13	8	22	16	9
18	1	11	20	3	15
7	14	21	4	19	12

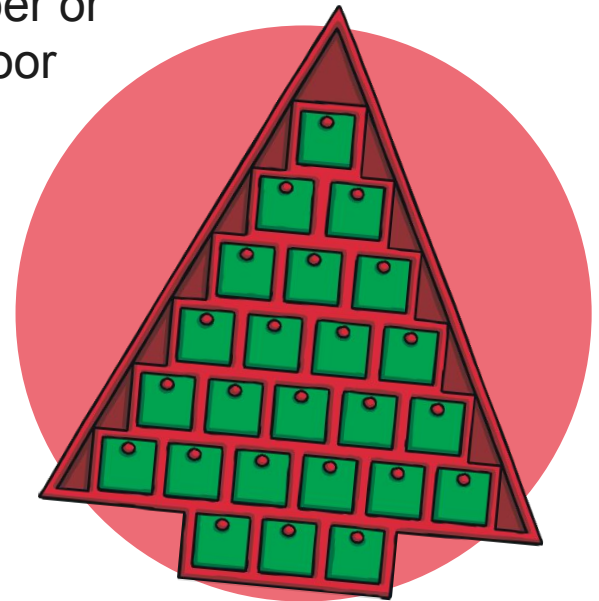
Advent Calendars

Advent starts the countdown to Christmas and is usually marked by Advent calendars or Advent candles.

Advent calendars originated in Germany in the late 1880s and had pictures from the Christmas Story.

Advent calendars were originally made from paper or card and had 24 doors. From December 1st a door was opened every day and revealed a Christmas picture.

Today there are lots of different Advent calendars, some have chocolate inside and some are interactive, like this one!



Christmas Cards

The first Christmas card was made by John Horsley, an artist and sent by Sir Henry Cole, a rich British businessmen around 1843.

About 1000 cards were made and sold for 1 shilling each. (A shilling is worth 5p in today's money, however, in 1843, it would have been worth around £4.00!)

Today lots of people still send Christmas cards to their family and friends to wish them a Happy Christmas.



Christmas Trees

A German man called Martin Luther was the first man to decorate a fir tree.

Christmas trees were made popular in this country after Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert put a Christmas tree in Windsor Castle.

Christmas trees used to be decorated with candles, sweets and cakes.

Today Christmas trees are decorated with fairy lights, tinsel and decorations.

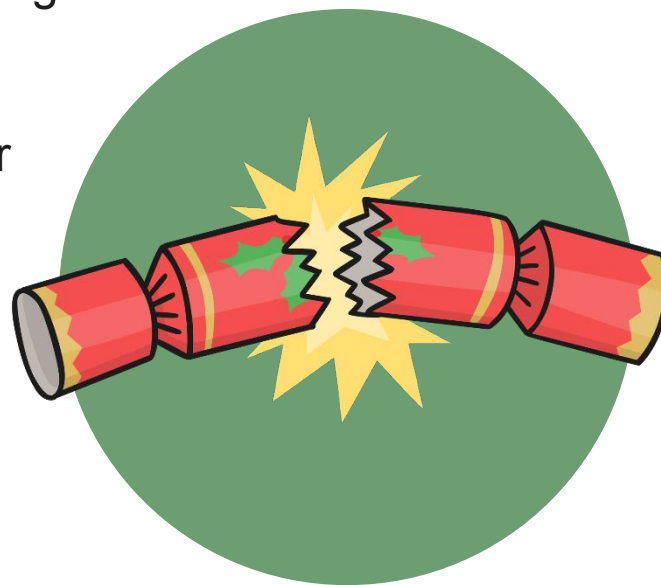


Christmas Crackers

Thomas Smith, a sweet shop owner from London invented Christmas crackers around 1846.

On a trip to Paris Thomas saw sweets being wrapped in tissue paper with a twist at each end. When he returned home he decided to sell sweets wrapped in a similar way with a motto or poem. They didn't sell that well, so he added a banger to make them more exciting!

When crackers are pulled today they still make a bang and most crackers have toys or gifts, jokes and paper hats inside.



Christmas Pudding

Christmas pudding started as a porridge called Frumenty and was made of beef and mutton, raisins and spices.

It later became known as Plum Pudding as eggs, breadcrumbs and fruit were added to make it thicker.

Today a Christmas pudding is traditionally made with raisins, nuts and cherries. Sometimes the Christmas pudding is covered with brandy and set alight.

A proper Christmas pudding should be stirred from East to West in honour of the Three Wise Men. A silver coin can be stirred into the pudding and brings luck to whoever finds it.



Nativity

At Christmas many schools perform a Nativity which is a play which tells the story of the birth of Jesus.

St Francis of Assisi performed the first Nativity in Italy in around 1223. He wanted to show people the story of the birth of Jesus, as many people couldn't read the story for themselves.

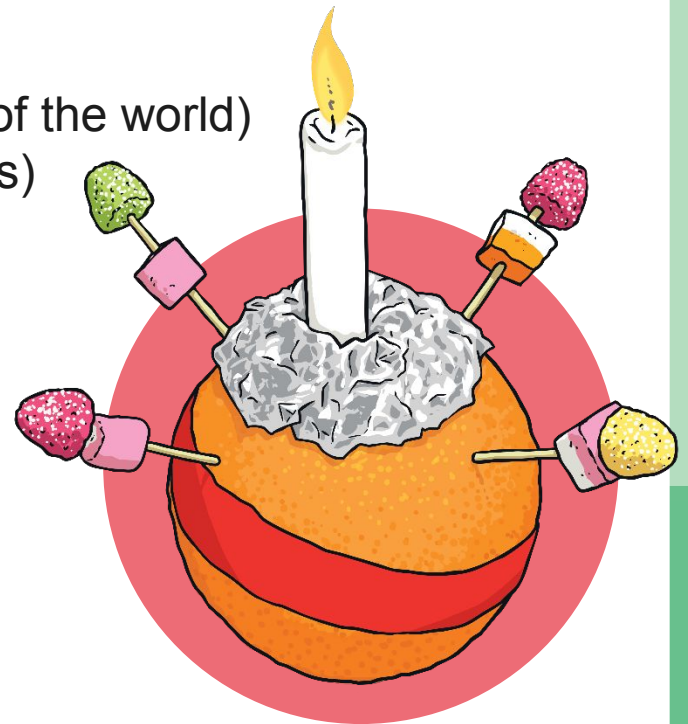


Christingles

Christingles originated from a Church in Germany where a minister gave children a candle with a red ribbon around it.

Today a Christingle is made up of different elements:

- an orange (to represent the world)
- a lit candle (to represent Jesus as the light of the world)
- a red ribbon (to represent the blood of Jesus)
- 4 sticks (to represent the four compass directions and the four seasons)
- fruits or sweets skewered on sticks (to represent the fruits of the earth)



Father Christmas

Father Christmas lives in the North Pole where his elves help him make toys to be delivered to children all over the world on Christmas Eve.

Father Christmas has many other names all over the world. Here are some of them: Santa Claus, Papa Noel, Sinterklaas, Christkind and Weihnachtsmann.



Wreath

Traditionally wreaths at Christmas are made from evergreens, twigs and flowers.

The evergreens represent the everlasting life of Jesus and the circular shape represents God having no beginning and no end.

At Christmas time wreaths are often hung on doors and used as decorations.



Yule Log

Traditionally a huge log would be chosen from the forest on Christmas Eve and brought into the house. The log would be put in the fire place and lit with a piece of last year's yule log. The log would stay burning through the 12 nights of Christmas.

The yule log was believed to have magical powers and bring luck to all those who helped bring it in.

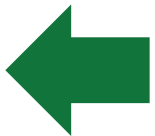
Chocolate yule logs are now popular desserts at Christmas time. These are made from chocolate sponge and covered in chocolate or chocolate icing to look like a log.



Stockings

One Christmas Eve, Father Christmas dropped some coins down a chimney of a family to help them. The coins landed in socks that were hung above the fire to dry.

Since then children have hung empty socks and stockings above fireplaces, near the Christmas tree and put them at the end of their beds, in the hope that Father Christmas will fill them up with food and gifts on Christmas Eve.



Carols

Christmas carols are songs about Jesus and when he was born.

The earliest carols were written in the 1400s and were usually sung in people's homes.

Christmas carols were banned by Oliver Cromwell between 1647 and 1660 because he believed Christmas should be a serious day.

Today carols are sung by carol singers who may go between houses singing or sing in the street. Carols are also sung in Church at carol services, sometimes by candlelight.



Mince Pies

Mince pies used to be cradle shaped to remind people of the manger baby Jesus was laid in. They were filled with minced meats and spices to remind people of the exotic gifts the Three Wise Men brought from the east.

Today mince pies are filled with dried fruit mix spices and are usually round. They can be eaten hot or cold and are often eaten with cream.

Father Christmas likes mince pies and many children leave mince pies out for him on Christmas Eve.



Candy Canes

Candy canes originated in Germany and started off as white sugar sticks.

Traditionally they are usually red and white striped and peppermint flavoured. They are shaped like a shepherd's crook and some say they are an upside down 'J' to represent Jesus.

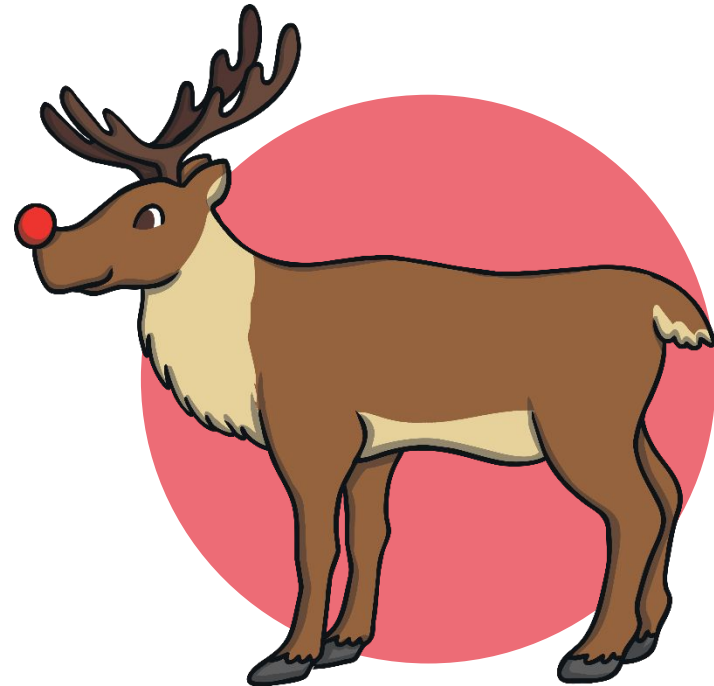


Reindeer

Reindeer are the animals chosen by Father Christmas to pull his sleigh on Christmas Eve.

There are 9 reindeer altogether. Their names are Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen and Rudolph.

Rudolph is the leader and he has a red nose that helps light up the dark and foggy nights.



Mistletoe

Mistletoe is a symbol of love and friendship and is believed to bring good luck.

At Christmas time mistletoe is often used as a decoration and sometimes hung from the ceiling. People sometimes kiss under the mistletoe as it is said to bring good luck.

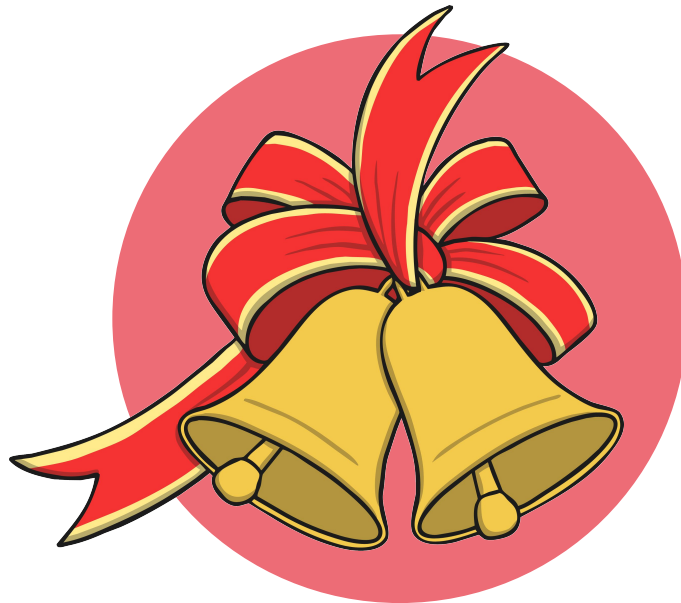


Bells

Bells rang to announce the birth of baby Jesus.

Bells are still rung in Church today to signal the start of services and as a celebration.

Bells are often used as decorations on Christmas trees .



Stars

The star is an important part of the Christmas story as the Star of Bethlehem guided the Three Wise Men to Bethlehem, to meet baby Jesus.

Stars are often used as decorations and lots of Christmas biscuits are cut in star shapes.

A star often is put on the top of the Christmas tree too.



Christmas Presents

The first Christmas presents were given to Jesus by the Three Wise Men, they gave Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

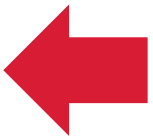
Families and friends give and receive Christmas Presents over Christmas, especially on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.



Angels

Angels are important at Christmas because it was an Angel who gave the message to the shepherds that baby Jesus had been born.

Angels are often used as decorations and put on the top of the Christmas tree.

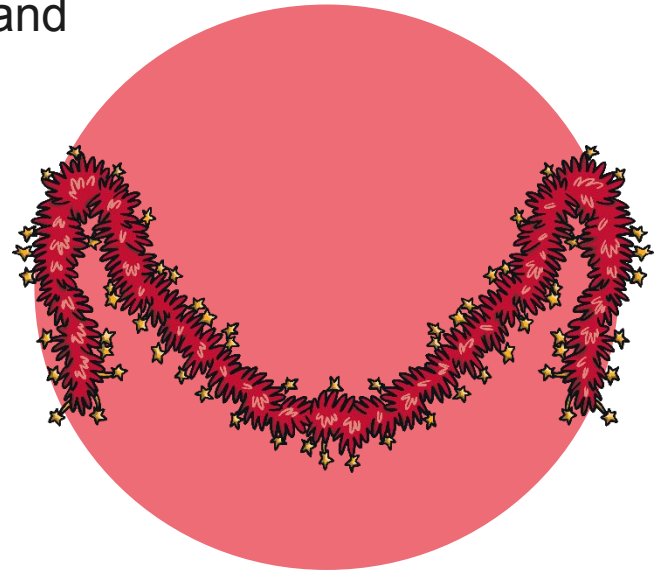


Tinsel

The first tinsel was made in Europe during the 1600s from shredded silver. It was designed to reflect the light from the candles on the Christmas tree.

Tinsel can be wrapped around the Christmas tree and hung from ceilings or walls. Tinsel is flexible, which also means it can be wrapped around and draped over things.

Tinsel today comes in all colours and some say it looks like icicles.



Christmas Day

Christmas Day is 25th December and is the day people celebrate the birth of Jesus.

On Christmas Day people celebrate with their family and friends by doing lots of special things such as giving and receiving presents, going to Church, eating a special Christmas dinner and playing games.

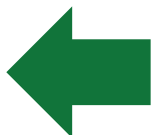


Boxing Day

Boxing Day is usually celebrated the day after Christmas on December 26th.

Christmas boxes were made of wood or clay and people placed gifts in them. Boxing Day was the day Christmas boxes were opened and shared with the poor.

Some people still make Christmas boxes and send them to people all over the world.



Candles and Lights

Candles and lights represent the Star of Bethlehem and Jesus as he is often called 'The Light of the World'.

Candles are sometimes used to light carol services, in Christingles and Advent candles help countdown to Christmas.

Candles used to be used to decorate Christmas trees, but electric lights are now used because they are much safer.



