



pro tips!
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LAUGHING ALL THE WAY!

It's the most wonderful time of the year! The holidays are extra special for many this year and there is no shortage of ways to celebrate this beautiful season! Amid all of the hustle and bustle, this time of year is a great opportunity to start new traditions and truly enjoy time with family and friends together.

A gingerbread house decorating party is a great way to kick off the season. Pro tip – hot glue the houses together and then just decorate with the frosting! You can also tie the party to a collection for those in need. Align the collection to a charity that resonates with your child. Collect blankets or dog/cat toys for a local animal shelter, socks/underwear for the homeless, or peanut butter for local school children who will have food sent home with them during winter break. Also, check an organization's wish list for ideas of things they need. If gingerbread houses are too complicated, you can also host a cookie decorating party with the same charitable component.

Movie nights are another festive way to celebrate the season and the Grinch is one of our favorite themes to celebrate! A Grinch party has to have just the right amount of mischief and holiday cheer. The ideas are endless when it comes to green food that can be served: Grinch popcorn, fruit skewers, Rice Krispy hearts, green punch, hot chocolate bar, you name it! Crafts can include making green slime or a Grinch ornament. By the end of the evening, everyone's hearts will have grown three sizes!

Ornament and cookie exchanges are popular holiday party ideas but there are fun twists that can be adapted for kids of all ages! Have a fuzzy sock exchange, a favorite things party, a white elephant exchange, a book exchange, or an ugly sweater swap. There are so many different exchanges that will engage kids of all ages and spread holiday cheer!

What is better than sugar plums dancing and nutcrackers marching?! With a Land of Sweets or Candy Land theme, you can create a sweet little get-together of your own! Set up a candy buffet, a chocolate fountain, or use cookie cutters to make foods look fun. Crafts ideas include painting unfinished nutcrackers or making candy/cupcake bath bombs.

There are so many wonderful holiday experiences for families that can be incorporated into any party theme or tradition. Some of our favorites include outdoor ice skating at Park Place, Journey to Judea's live walk through the story of Christmas, Santa's Gingerbread Station at Crown Center, The Polar Express Train in Branson, Silver Dollar City's performance of *A Dickens' Christmas Carol*, writing letters to Santa, Christmas caroling, and a new Mill's Farm family favorite: the holiday scavenger hunt! We hope that however your family celebrates this magical time of year, it is memorable for years to come!

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