

## WINTER HOLIDAYS

### Vocabulary

**holiday** – a time of rest from work or school

**the holiday season** – the time from late November through January when several holidays (such as Christmas and New Year's Eve) happen

**vacation** – a holiday or time spent not working

**day off** – a day's holiday from work or school on what would normally be a working day

**tradition** – a belief, custom, or way of doing something that has existed for a long time, or these beliefs, customs etc in general

**Christmas** – the period of time around December 25th, the day when Christians celebrate the birth of Christ

**Noel** – means Christmas, the word is used especially in songs and on cards

**candy cane** – a stick of hard red and white sugar with a curved end

**candle** – a stick of wax with a string through the middle, which you burn to give light

**poinsettia** – a tropical plant with groups of large red or white leaves that look like flowers (it is also known as Christmas Flower)

**bauble/(Christmas) ornament** – a brightly colored decoration that looks like a ball and is used to decorate a Christmas tree

**Christmas stocking** – a long sock or similar receptacle hung up by children on Christmas Eve to be filled with presents

**Christmas cookie** – a cookie that people eat in the US at Christmas

**Christmas tree** – a fir tree that people put in their houses and decorate for Christmas

**fir** – a tree with leaves shaped like needles that do not fall off in winter

**pine** – a tall tree with long hard sharp leaves that do not fall off in winter

**reindeer** – a large deer with long wide antlers (horns), that lives in cold northern areas, usually associated with Christmas

**Boxing Day** – the day after Christmas Day, which is a public holiday in the UK and some other countries

**holly** – a small tree with sharp dark green leaves and red berries or the leaves and berries of this tree, used as a decoration at Christmas

**costume** – a set of clothes worn by people to make them look like something such as an animal, famous person, etc.

**Hanukkah** – an eight-day Jewish holiday in November or December

**Menorah (Hanukkah)** – a Jewish candlestick that holds seven or nine candles

**New Year's Day** – a national holiday celebrated on January 1, the first day of the New Year

**bell** – a hollow metal object like a cup with a piece of metal hanging inside it that makes a ringing

**ball drop** – refers to the New Year's Eve celebration in New York's Times Square that features a large ball sliding down a pole until it reaches the ground at midnight

**New Year's resolution** – a firm decision made on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day to do or refrain from doing something over the course of the coming year

**eve** – the night or day before a holiday or an important day

**Valentine's Day** – celebrated on February 14, a day when you give a valentine card to someone you have (or would like to have) a romantic relationship with buying presents

**Cupid** – the god of desire, love, attraction, and affection, commonly used to represent love

**ring** – a piece of jewelry that you wear on your finger

**proposal** – an offer of marriage

**engagement** – an agreement between two people to marry or the period of time they are engaged

**shopping** – the activity of going to shops and buying things

**window-shopping** – the activity of looking at goods in shop windows without intending to buy them

**gift/present** – something that you give someone, for example, to thank them or because you like them, especially on a special occasion

**balloon** – an object made of brightly coloured thin rubber that is filled with air and used as a toy or decoration for parties

**greeting card** – a decorative card sent with good wishes

**gift tag** – a tag attached to a gift that says who it is from

**party** – an event when a lot of people meet together to enjoy themselves by eating, drinking, dancing, etc.

**crowd** – a large group of people

**annual** – yearly

**family reunion** – an occasion when members of an extended family gather together

**advent** – the period of four weeks before Christmas in the Christian religion

**announcement** – an important or official statement

**decoration** – something pretty that you put in a place or on top of something to make it look attractive

**dressing** – a mixture of liquids, usually oil and vinegar, that you put on salad or raw vegetables

**eggnog** – a drink made from eggs, sugar, milk, and alcohol, drunk at Christmas

**elf** – an imaginary creature like a small person with pointed ears and magical powers

**goodwill** – kind feelings towards or between people and a willingness to be helpful

**frosty** – extremely cold

**icicle** – a long thin pointed piece of ice hanging from a roof or other surface

**jolly** – happy and enjoying yourself

**merry** – happy, cheerful, jolly

**miracle** – something very lucky or very good that happens which you did not expect to happen or did not think was possible

---

**mistletoe** – a plant with small white berries, which grows on trees  
**North Pole** – the most northern point on the surface of the Earth  
**parade** – a public celebration when musical bands, brightly decorated vehicles etc move down the street  
**pie** – fruit baked inside a pastry covering  
**sacred** – relating to a god or religion  
**sledge** – a small vehicle used for sliding over snow, often used by children or in some sports  
**togetherness** – the pleasant feeling you have when you are part of a group of people who have a close relationship with each other

## Verbs

**to help** – to make it possible or easier for someone to do something by doing part of their work or by giving them something they need  
**to worry** – to be anxious or unhappy about someone or something so that you think about them a lot  
**to celebrate** – to take part in special enjoyable activities in order to show that a particular event or holiday is important  
**to cook** – to prepare food for eating by using heat  
**to bake** – to cook something in an oven using dry heat  
**to buy** – to get something by paying money for it  
**to prepare** – to make plans or arrangements for something that will happen in the future  
**to order** – to ask for food or a drink in a restaurant, bar  
**to handle** – to manage, to solve a situation or a problem  
**to prance** – to walk or dance with high steps or large movements, especially in a confident way

## Phrases

**a bundle of nerves** – someone who is very nervous  
**to be (just) around the corner** – to be not far away or to happen very soon  
**You are spot on.** – You are correct.  
**take it easy** – used to tell someone to relax and to not think much of the situation  
**to make a shopping list** – to make a list of things you want to buy so you will not forget them  
**to exchange gifts/presents** – when someone gives you a present and, in return, you give them one as well  
**to have a look at something** – to look at something in a quick manner

**to calm down** – to become quiet and relaxed after you have been angry, excited, nervous, or upset, or to make someone become quiet and relaxed

**to do a favour (BrE)/favor (AmE)** – something that you do for someone in order to help them or be kind to them

**to wander around** – to walk somewhere without a destination or purpose

**to take time off** – to take a vacation from work for some period of time

**What's up?** – an informal way of asking someone what is new in their life

**to live the life** – when someone is really enjoying themselves and they are having a really good time without worrying about anything, including money

**SO** (short for significant other) – your husband/wife or boyfriend/girlfriend

**to turn one's life around** – to completely change or improve one's life

**to pop the champagne** – to open a bottle of champagne with a peculiar "pop" sound

**to quit cold turkey** – to quit a bad habit all at once, not gradually

**to countdown** – to count backwards (from a higher number to a lower one) to the start of a specific event

## Grammar Corner

We use the *present perfect continuous* tense if we want to describe an event that started in the past and has some connection to the present. In addition, we want to highlight its duration (even if we are not mentioning it, e.g. for a year, since 2014, etc.).

*e.g. I've been trying to find some cute presents for my nieces for over a week. I don't know what to get them!*

*How long have you been cooking? – I've been cooking for more than 13 hours now. I'm so exhausted. I just want this Christmas madness to be over.*

We use the *past continuous* tense if we want to describe an ongoing past event that was happening at a specific moment in the past.

*e.g. It was a New Year's Eve. Our parents were sleeping, I was playing video games in my room, and our cat was eating Christmas decorations.*

*What did you do yesterday? – Oh well. I was cleaning, I was cooking, I was working out, I was doing everything!*

## Real Life Situations

(P1 – Person 1, P2 – Person 2)

### It's Christmas Time

P1: Hey, is everything all right?

P2: Hi! Yes, I am fine, thank you. Why?

P1: You look like a bundle of nerves.

P2: Really? Maybe it's cause I've been working overtime.

P1: Let me guess. Trying to meet deadlines since January is just around the corner?

P2: Spot on. December is always one of the most difficult months. I think I'm about to get an allergic reaction to it or something.

P1: Take it easy. The holiday season is coming! Christmas is just a few days away.

P2: Most of the time, I start getting ready for Christmas around November, but this time it's been a complete mess. I haven't bought presents yet, nothing's been decorated. My place is a complete mess.

P1: Poor thing! Don't stress it though, you can always order presents online. Have you bought a Christmas tree?

P2: Damn! I remembered – my cat broke it last year, I was planning on buying a new one, but...

P1: But then you forgot?

P2: Exactly. Well, I guess one more thing added to my to-do list.

P1: Okay, calm down. I can help you out. Let's make an actual to-do list along with shopping, cleaning, and other tasks.

P2: First, a Christmas tree, obviously. Then cleaning up my filthy place.

P1: Great! What's gonna be third?

P2: Presents, definitely presents. I want to get my mom a dress, something really stylish, then a comfy bathrobe for dad, Christmas sweaters for my cousins, a book for my sister, and as for my brother-in-law... Let's stick to one more Christmas sweater.

P1: I've always wondered what makes people buy these ugly Christmas sweaters. Now I get it though – people are working 24/7, so they don't have time to think of something more creative.

P2: As for me, I actually like getting Christmas sweaters, I wear them during the whole holiday season. They are warm, cozy, and really funny.

P1: Sounds reasonable. Will you cook anything?

P2: I'll be staying at my parents for a couple of days, so probably not. Although I need to have at least something in the fridge closer to New Year's Eve – I might have some friends over.

P1: Sounds like a plan! You seem less stressed now.

P2: Thanks for helping me out. I owe you the ugliest, I mean, the prettiest Christmas sweater!

### **New Year's Eve**

P1: Hi, Dave! What's up?

P2: Hey there! Nothing much, I am just living the life and doing absolutely nothing.

P1: Oh, so this year you decided to stay at home for the winter holidays, didn't you?

P2: Yeah, one of my New Year's resolutions for this year was to spend more time with my family. So as soon as my boss said that I could have some time off in December, I booked a flight home. I love this feeling of togetherness when everyone is around. Plus, it means that I don't have to do anything cause I'm a guest now.

P1: This is really smart!

P2: I know, right? So what have you been up to?

P1: Just running some errands and thinking about my resolutions.

P2: You decided to make a list this time?

P1: Yeah, it's pretty long. First of all, I want to find love, a significant other. You know that I've been somewhat unlucky with relationships this year, so in 2020 I'm going to turn my life around.

P2: Ah, yep, I'm rooting for you as well!

P1: Thank you. So my second one is smoking.

P2: Awful!

P1: I mean I wanna quit.

P2: Awesome!

P1: Thanks for the encouragement. This time I want to quit cold turkey though.

P2: I hope everything goes well!

P1: Thanks! So will you stay for New Year's with your family too?

P2: Not sure yet. I might go to some friend's place if someone invites me.

P1: I'm throwing a party at my place, so if you want, you can come over. It's gonna be fun! Tasty food, music, a cozy atmosphere, popping champagne...

P2: Thanks for inviting me! Do I need to bring drinks or snacks?

P1: You can bring snacks, yeah. The drinks are covered, so no worries.

P2: Got it.

P1: Cool. I'm still undecided whether to invite everyone earlier, at like 4 or 5 pm, so I'll let you know about the time tomorrow, OK?

P2: Sure, no problem!

### **My Valentine**

P1: Judy, why are you prancing like this all day?

P2: This is so overwhelming! I can't help it, really!

P1: What happened?

P2: Kevin proposed to me on St. Valentine's Day!

P1: Wow, congratulations! I am so happy for you! A proposal on St. Valentine's Day – that is so romantic!

P2: Yes! You know we've been doing the whole long-distance thing, so of course, we discussed marriage and our future, but I still didn't think it'd happen so soon!

P1: Was it a surprise visit then?

P2: Yeah! Can you believe it? He came to my house while I was still sleeping. He sent me a morning text and waited for my response so that he knew that I was awake. Then I heard someone knocking on my door – and it was Kev!

P1: Oh my gosh, that is so romantic! Did he stand on his knee right there?

P2: Yep, right on my doorway, and me with my bed hair. He stood on his knee and asked me if I wanted to become his wife. I burst into tears, but obviously I said yes.

P1: Your love story is made for movie screens. You met him online during Christmas, fell in love, and your first meeting in person was on St. Valentine's Day too.

P2: Yes, we actually discussed this with him. Winter holidays are very special for us, so we try to come up with cute date ideas and everything, but this year he's definitely outplayed me!

P1: I am so happy for you! You're glowing, girl! You are a perfect match.

P2: Thank you! Now we have to handle a lot of formal things like documents, visa, etc. And planning the wedding ceremony, of course.

P1: Will you have a wedding twice?

P2: We're not sure yet, but I doubt it, honestly. It's just too expensive to have a wedding here and then in his home country.

P1: Makes sense. Have you already chosen the date?

P2: Cupid has chosen it for us – it's February 14, a year from now.

P1: You two are so romantic! I'm so happy for you!