

# Give kids a hand-made Christmas

The holiday season is upon us and each year we vow that we will get better organized, do things sooner and spend less money.

Well this year you can do all three by following this easy guide... shop less and turn that time into "quality family time". The magic formula to Christmas and other family holidays is the things that are done together that allow everyone, big or small, to feel useful and to be a part of the job.

This Christmas you can accomplish this by having a few family craft sessions with your family.

Not only will this kindle those family feelings before Christmas, it will set-up some ideas for some shared family experiences after Christmas for those long winter-Sunday afternoons.

Keep the crafts simple, prepare the materials and equipment needed beforehand, show them a model and set aside enough time so you can enjoy and not be in a rush. Listed below are some craft ideas for the whole family to make your Christmas a little more home made.

## Message Board

**Reinforces:** writing, spelling, following directions.

**Need:** Poster (tag) board, stick-on letters or markers, clear MacTack, felt tip pens, a hole puncher and yarn or ribbon.

**Preparation:** 1. Cut the tag board to the size of message board you would like. 2. Use the stick-on letters or magic markers to spell out a name of the person you are giving it to and the words 'Message Centre'. This is to be printed across the top of the tag board. 3. Use the markers to mark off the board in three sections: 'Shopping List', 'Calls to Make' and 'Special Numbers'. 4. Cover the board with the clear plastic, this will protect it and it can also be written on with a wipe-off marker. 5. Punch a hole in each corner at the top left and right corner and thread the ribbon or yarn and this will make a hanger for the board. 6. Tie a felt-tipped pen with the yarn or ribbon and attach it through the holes at the top of the tag board. (From: *Sesame Street Magazine*, December 1987.)

## Christmas Placemats

**Reinforces:** cutting, visual-spatial skills, co-ordination.

**Need:** Construction paper (12 x 18"), scissors, plastic food wrap, glue and old Christmas cards, catalogues or Christmas paper scraps.

**Activity:** This is a great activity to prepare for Christmas dinner or breakfast.

Using 12 x 18" construction paper or cardboard let the children decorate their own placemats to be used for dinner. Cut out pictures from used Christmas cards and wrap.

Paste the pictures on the construction paper. Overlap the pictures so none of the cardboard is showing. When they are completed, add the person's name who will be using it or write a greeting.

Then cover the placemat with plastic food wrap or clear MacTack. The food wrap will have to be taped to hold it onto the back.

## Victorian Paper Fans

**Reinforces:** motor skills, directions, hand-eye co-ordination.

**Need:** 8 x 10 piece of wallpaper or Christmas wrapping paper cut in the proper dimensions (foil paper works great and looks elegant), tape, ribbon and a stapler.

**Preparation:** Pleat a 8" x 10" rectangular piece of wallpaper or Christmas paper into 1" accordion folds. Fold the pleated strips in half. This will form the fan when the two edges are joined. Tape the two pleated edges together in the centre. Staple or tape a bow on the bottom of the pleated fan. Experiment with the size of the paper and you could make smaller ones to go on a gift as a tag or as decorations on the Christmas tree. (Adapted from: *Making Your Own Traditions* by D.Hunter).

## Gingerbread People

**Reinforces:** measurement, estimating, and fine motor skills.

**Need:** 3 cups of flour, 1 tsp. of baking soda, 2 tsp. of ginger, 1/2



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cups of butter or margarine, 1 cup of brown sugar, 4 tablespoons of light corn syrup, 1 egg and raisins or currants and icing (if desired).

**Preparation:** Sift the flour, baking soda, and ginger into a bowl. Cut in the butter with a knife until the mixture looks like fine breadcrumbs. Add the brown sugar and mix well. Put the corn syrup in a warm bowl. Beat in the egg and stir the mixture into the flour. Mix together to form soft dough. Knead until smooth. Roll the dough into 1/4-inch thickness and cut into people shapes with a cutter or a knife if you are brave. Add raisins or currants for the eyes, mouth and buttons. When they are cooled you can add icing for hair or clothing.

Bake in a pre-heated 375 degree F oven for 10 minutes or until pale golden brown. Makes about 20, but get the children to estimate how many the recipe will make.

**Activity:** These are great for gifts

with the storybook of The Gingerbread Man or Hansel and Gretel. Also they can be used as gift tags or place markers at the Christmas Dinner table.

## Gifts for a Small Budget

1. Play dough and cookie cutters.
2. Hair accessories: comb, gel, spray, shampoo and ribbons.
3. Indoor hopscotch: take an old shower curtain and paint on a hopscotch grid.
4. Green thumb: Some seeds or bulbs, a pot and earth are hours of anticipated fun for weeks on end.
5. Story tapes: ideal for a small child. The story can be read into a tape by an older child. If you can enclose the book in a zip-lock bag all the better.
6. A goody basket: Finger paint, some paper (or wax paper) and a plastic apron.
7. Rainy day fun pack: a package of hot chocolate, slippers and a story book.
8. Water fun: some sponges cut into animal shapes and some bubble bath, a funnel and plastic measuring cups.
9. The unbirthday package: balloons, birthday hats, ice cream bars, noise makers and a music tape. (Refrigerate!)

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