FREE PLANNER · 2026

# The Family Christmas Party Planner

Everything you need to host a relaxed family Christmas party: a week-by-week countdown, invite wording, a headcount table, food amounts and kids' activities. Print it, or copy what you need.


01 Your party countdown
02 Guest list and headcount
03 Invitation wording
04 Chasing replies
05 Food: how much to make
06 Kids' corner
07 Gift exchange
08 Budget
09 Party day
10 After the party




Calla

# Your party countdown

Send invitations 4 weeks before the party. December weekends fill up early, and the families you most want there plan furthest ahead.

**Starting late?** Begin at the row that matches your date, and do the earlier rows this week.

WEEK −6

## 6 weeks out

- [ ] Pick the date, plus a start and an end time (an end time helps families plan around naps and bedtime)
- [ ] Decide the size: family only, or friends and neighbours too
- [ ] Draft the guest list (table on the next page)
- [ ] Set a budget (table on page 8)

WEEK −4

## 4 weeks out

- [ ] Send the invitations with a reply-by date about 10 days before the party
- [ ] Decide who cooks: you, a potluck, or a mix
- [ ] Book anything you rent or hire (extra chairs, a Santa visit)

WEEK −3

## 3 weeks out

- [ ] Plan the menu and hand out potluck dishes
- [ ] Choose the kids' activities and order supplies
- [ ] Agree the gift exchange rules and price limit

WEEK −2

## 2 weeks out

- [ ] Follow up with anyone who hasn't replied (messages on page 5)
- [ ] Ask about allergies and dietary needs
- [ ] Plan music and decorations

WEEK −1

## 1 week out

- [ ] Lock the final headcount, adults and kids separately
- [ ] Buy drinks, paper goods and anything that keeps
- [ ] Confirm potluck dishes; send the address and parking details

DAYS −3 TO −2

## 2–3 days out

- [ ] Buy fresh food; make anything that freezes or keeps
- [ ] Set up the coat drop and the kids' corner
- [ ] Clear fridge space and charge the speaker

# Guest list and headcount

Count adults and kids separately: they eat different amounts, and the kids' numbers decide the activities.

| Household | Adults | Kids (ages) | Invited | Reply | Allergies / dietary | Bringing |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
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| **Total** | | | | | | |

# Invitation wording you can copy

Every invite needs five things: the date, a start and end time, the address, a reply-by date, and what (if anything) to bring. Swap in your details where you see brackets.

### COZY FAMILY GATHERING

Join us for Christmas at the [Family name]s'!
[Day, date] · [start]–[end]
[Address]
Good food, warm drinks and the whole family under one roof. Kids very welcome.
Please reply by [date] so we know how many to cook for.

### KIDS' CHRISTMAS PARTY

Santa's helpers wanted!
[Child's name] is having a Christmas party: cookie decorating, crafts and games.
[Day, date] · [start]–[end] · [Address]
Parents are welcome to stay for cocoa. Let us know about any allergies.
Reply by [date].

### UGLY SWEATER PARTY

The uglier the better.
Ugly Sweater Christmas Party at ours, [day, date] · [start]–[end].
[Address]
Prizes for the worst sweater (adults and kids).
Reply by [date].

### POTLUCK OPEN HOUSE

Drop by for our Christmas open house!
[Day, date] · any time [start]–[end] · [Address]
We'll have mains and drinks covered. If you'd like to bring something, tell us what when you reply, so we don't end up with five trays of cookies.
Reply by [date].

# Chasing replies without the group chat

Give a reply-by date, then follow up once, personally, two days after it passes.

- **Message people one by one.** In a group chat, a question gets a thumbs-up instead of an answer.
- **Ask a yes-or-no question.** "Are you coming?" gets answered; "Let me know!" doesn't.
- **Make replying easy.** A link where guests pick Going, Maybe or Can't beats a thread of maybes.

A **Calla** invitation works exactly like that: guests reply from one link without downloading anything, and every answer lands in one list for you.

**FRIENDLY NUDGE**

Hi [name]! Still hoping you can make our Christmas party on [date]. Could you let me know by [date] so I can plan the food?

**YES OR NO**

Quick one: are you in for the party on [date], yes or no? Totally fine either way, I'm just counting chairs.

**LAST CALL**

Last call for the headcount: I'm ordering food tomorrow. Are you coming on [date]? You can reply here: [link]

# Food: how much to make

Count each child under 10 as half an adult. These are starting points for a 3-hour evening party; round up if your crowd eats big.

| Item | Per adult | Per child (under 10) | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Appetizers, no dinner served | 10–12 bites | 5–6 bites | Mix hot and cold |
| Appetizers before dinner | 4–6 bites | 2–3 bites | Keep it light |
| Main (meat or protein), cooked | 170 g (6 oz) | 85 g (3 oz) | Ham, turkey or a vegetarian main |
| Each side dish | 115 g (½ cup) | 60 g (¼ cup) | Plan 2–3 sides |
| Dessert | 2 pieces | 2 pieces | Cookies count as half a piece |
| Drinks (all kinds) | 3–4 | 2–3 | Plus water on the table |
| Ice | 0.5 kg (1 lb) | — | More if drinks sit in coolers |

## Potluck sign-up

Ask guests to name their dish when they reply, then fill this in so nothing doubles up.

| Course | Who's bringing | Serves | Contains (nuts, dairy, gluten…) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Appetizer | | | |
| Appetizer | | | |
| Main | | | |
| Side | | | |
| Side | | | |
| Salad | | | |
| Dessert | | | |
| Dessert | | | |
| Drinks | | | |

# Kids' corner

Plan one activity per age group and ask one adult to run each in shifts. Set up a quiet corner too, with blankets and picture books for little ones who get overwhelmed.

| Ages | Activity | You'll need | Time |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2–4 | Jingle bell freeze dance | Christmas playlist, bells | 10 min |
| 2–4 | Cotton-ball snowmen | Paper, glue sticks, cotton balls, googly eyes | 15 min |
| 5–8 | Cookie decorating | Plain sugar cookies, icing, sprinkles, paper plates | 30 min |
| 5–8 | Letters to Santa | Paper, crayons, envelopes. Mail to Santa Claus, North Pole, H0H 0H0 by **December 9, 2026**. No stamp needed in Canada; add a return address so Santa can reply | 20 min |
| 5–8 | Christmas scavenger hunt | A list of 10 things hidden around the house | 20 min |
| 9–12 | Gingerbread house build-off | A kit per team, a timer, a prize | 45 min |
| 9–12 | Christmas charades | Slips of paper with movie and song titles | 20 min |
| All ages | Photo corner | A festive backdrop, props, a phone on a stand | All party |

# Gift exchange

Pick one format, set one price limit, and put both in the invite so nobody shows up empty-handed or over-spends.

### Secret Santa

Best for adults who know each other

1. Draw names 3 weeks before the party; nobody draws their own household.
2. Set a price limit, for example $25.
3. Everyone brings one wrapped gift labelled with the recipient's name.
4. Open them one at a time so everyone sees.

### Gift swap

Best for mixed groups and kids

1. Everyone brings one wrapped gift that suits anyone, within the price limit.
2. Draw numbers. Number 1 opens a gift.
3. Each next person either opens a new gift or steals one already opened.
4. A gift can be stolen twice, then it's locked. The game ends when every gift is open.

Run a separate kids' swap with a lower limit (for example $10), so children only trade with children.

# Budget

Set the total first, then split it. Food and drinks usually take the biggest share.

| Category | Planned ($) | Spent ($) | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|
| Food | | | |
| Drinks and ice | | | |
| Paper plates, cups, napkins | | | |
| Decorations | | | |
| Kids' activities and crafts | | | |
| Prizes and party favours | | | |
| Rentals or hired help | | | |
| Extra (something always comes up) | | | |
| **Total** | | | |

# Party day

Aim to be ready an hour early; someone always arrives first.

### MORNING

- [ ] Final food prep; set out serving dishes with a sticky note naming what goes in each
- [ ] Chill drinks and fill ice buckets
- [ ] Set up the kids' activity tables and the quiet corner
- [ ] Clear a spot for coats, boots and wet mitts
- [ ] Put out labels for dishes with nuts, dairy or gluten

### ONE HOUR BEFORE

- [ ] Lights on, music on, candles somewhere kids can't reach
- [ ] Clear the entrance and salt the front steps
- [ ] Empty the dishwasher and put out a fresh garbage bag
- [ ] Phone charged, camera ready for the photo corner

### WHEN GUESTS ARRIVE

- [ ] Take coats; point kids to the activity tables
- [ ] Put potluck dishes where they belong
- [ ] Take a group photo early, while everyone still looks fresh

# After the party

Say thank you within two days, while the party is still fresh.

- [ ] Return potluck dishes (a strip of masking tape with the owner's name, added on arrival, saves guessing)
- [ ] Collect everyone's photos in one place before they scatter across phones
- [ ] Send a thank-you, with a favourite photo if you have one
- [ ] Note what to keep or change for next year

### A THANK-YOU YOU CAN COPY

Thank you for coming on [date]! The kids are still talking about [moment]. It wouldn't have been the same without you. Merry Christmas from all of us!

# Send your invite with Calla

Calla turns the countdown, the guest list and the RSVP chase into one link.

**FREE**

- Pick one of the free Christmas designs, add your party details, and share one link.
- Guests tap Going, Maybe or Can't from the link. They don't need the app or an account.
- Every reply lands in one list with a running headcount, and each reply shows its adults and kids.
- Prefer the family group chat? Send the finished card as a picture instead.
- Turn on the party album and guests can add their photos from the same link. Photos are deleted 7 days after the party.

**PREMIUM** (new accounts get a 14-day free trial)

- Animated invitations: the card unfolds and the artwork moves before guests see your details.

Make your invite at **getcalla.ca/get**, then come back to this planner for everything else. Merry Christmas!

**getcalla.ca/get**

Scan with your phone camera