

Holiday Tips

Santa & Presents

- If your child doesn't want to sit on Santa's lap, encourage them to try it and follow up with something they like. Don't force it though. If you have to force it, you're not going to get a good picture anyway.
- Create "rules for opening presents" and role-play what to say if your child doesn't like a present someone gives them or if they already have it.
- If this is your child's first year opening presents or if they have fine motor issues, wrap their current toys and let them practice opening gifts the week before.
- Count down to the day when gifts will be opened, "Ten days until we open gifts!" You might even use a visual countdown. If this is still too enticing, consider hiding gifts until it's time to open.
- If your child struggles when things don't go as planned, or if Santa doesn't bring that certain present they really want, open presents early or with just immediate family to allow them plenty of time to calm down.



Holiday Travel

- If you are traveling for the holidays, arrange to have your child's favorite foods, books or toys available. Having familiar items readily available can help to calm stressful situations.
- If your son or daughter is flying for the first time, it may be helpful to bring them to the airport in advance of the trip to help them become accustomed to airports and airplanes. Additionally, prepare your child for unexpected flight delays.

Decorations

- Avoid using glass ornaments on the tree; opt for plastic, shatterproof decorations.
- Engage your child as much as possible in the decorating process. For some children, it may also be helpful to take them shopping for holiday decorations so they feel like part of the process.
- If your child has difficulty with change, you may want to decorate the house gradually. You may also need to create rules about which decorations can be touched and which cannot. Be direct, specific and consistent.

Other Holiday Considerations

- Know your child and avoid potentially long and adverse trips to areas with light and sound displays, if necessary. The traffic can be terrible, the music may be different from that which your child usually listens to, and the display may not be as enjoyed by them as the parent would hope.
- If you will be visiting a friend's or relative's home, prepare your child in advance with information about pets, other children who may be there, food that will be served, etc. If your child has a history of wandering, you should also find out from those you will be visiting what (if any) kind of home security system they have.
- Prepare a photo album of relatives and other guests whom your child will be seeing during the holidays. Go through the photo album with them while talking briefly about each family member, and allow your child free access to the album so it may be looked at again whenever desired.