

Sensory-friendly holiday checklist



Holidays can be hard on kids who have sensory processing challenges. Use this six-week checklist to help them enjoy the holidays a bit more. Fill in the dates for each week. You can add your own “to-dos” on the blank lines.



Week 1: _____

- Create a holiday plan with activities you’ll do and people you’ll visit.
- Look through cookbooks to find holiday dishes your child will enjoy. Add them to your menu or offer to bring one to the holiday meal at someone else’s home.
- Find comfortable clothes for holiday events. For example, black leggings with a soft sweater can look dressy but still feel comfortable.
- _____

Week 2: _____

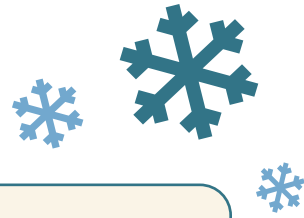
- If light bothers your child, search online together for pictures of holiday displays. Talk about what your child would be OK with before you decorate.
- Decide how your family will handle presents this year. Exchanging gifts can be stressful for some kids. So can shopping. If you’re buying gifts, shopping online can help you and your child avoid crowds.
- Set up a “holiday-free” zone at home so your child can decompress. This place should be free from holiday decorations, food smells, and people.
- _____

Week 3: _____

- Send a note to friends and family you’ll visit this season. Explain that you may arrive late or leave early. And share anything they need to know about your child’s sensory needs.
- Practice friendly holiday greetings with your child. For example, your child may be more comfortable giving a head nod and a smile instead of a hug.
- Create a fun “survival kit” of calming items for your child. One idea is a winter-themed sensory bottle.
- _____



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Week 4: _____

- When going to worship services or other public events, pick times that won't be too crowded.
- Come up with a creative "escape" signal your child can use to tell you "I need a break!"
- Watch your child's favorite holiday movie together. Snuggling is a great way to provide sensory input for kids who like that.
- _____

Week 5: _____

- Visit some of the holiday sights. Or see that holiday blockbuster movie now that the crowds have died down.
- Take a break from holiday activities. Enjoy spending time alone with your child.
- _____

Week 6: _____

- Meet up with people you didn't see at the holidays. Keep it small and simple.
- With the holiday season over, it's time to get back in shape for school. Return to a regular sleep schedule. And talk about goals for the next half of the school year.
- _____

