

North Central Parenting Group

# PARENT TIMES



Dec. 2012 Vol. 38 No. 3

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## Celebrate...

the warmth of the Season,  
the beauty of the Season,  
the memories of the Season,  
and the joy of the Season.



The holiday season is all about celebrating and we know things can get a little crazy with all the work the season demands. But let's not forget to nurture our relationships, cherish our children and have fun creating family traditions. These are the moments when memories are made.

Our holiday wish is that we all continue to celebrate the wonderful bonds we've created through our children and with our participation as moms in all that NCPG has to offer. It has been the greatest gift to us and we hope to all of you as well.

May you have peace and happiness this Holiday Season and we wish you a very Happy New Year!

Lisa Barnes and Tricia Rochford

# dreaming of a white christmas?



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# HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

REMEMBER:  
Refer your friends, and they can  
try their first class for FREE.

## Teaching Your Child the True Meaning of Christmas

from: [blog.tadpoles.com](http://blog.tadpoles.com)

Teach your child the true meaning of Christmas through stories, involvement and home-made gift giving.

With Christmas only a few days away, make sure your toddler or young child knows about its true meaning. But how can something so complex be explained to someone so young? Here's some tips on explaining the true meaning of Christmas to your child.

### Get Excited

Between work, kids, keeping up with chores and holiday shopping, if you're like most people, you're probably exhausted. Make it a habit to get excited for story time and get into character, telling stories from classic Christmas books and gauge your child's reaction. If your child sees you getting excited about something, they will realize it's important. And the repetition of the stories will reinforce the true meaning of Christmas.

### Get Involved

Show your children how you understand the meaning of Christmas by getting them involved. Since Christmas is about giving, have them help hand out cookies or Christmas cards to neighbors. If you do make cookies, let your child help—handing something out that they've made will be truly rewarding.

### Get Hand-Made

In the spirit of giving, have your child make hand-made gifts for loved ones such as a time capsule ornament, candles, or any artwork.



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*NCPG is a non-profit, non-denominational organization  
providing classes to parents of infant to pre-school age children.*

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[www.ncpgaz.org](http://www.ncpgaz.org)



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## Parent Times

*Members, this monthly newsletter is for YOUR benefit, so we want to ensure our team is publishing content that is valuable, useful, informative, and fun! We don't want this to be something that gets lost in your stack of mail. Please let us know if you have suggestions, comments, concerns, or any input that would help us to improve this publication. Thanks for your help!*



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## Kickstart Your Child's Bedtime Routine

*Kickstart your child's bedtime routine before the excitement of Christmas Eve rolls around. Not only will your child be rested for the day's excitement, but you will have extra time to "help Santa" with his visit. Here are a few suggestions pulled from "Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child" by Marc Weissbluth, M.S.*

Just as soothing helps your child feel safe and secure, bedtime routines help all children calm down before falling asleep, because both are associated with the natural state of relaxed drowsiness. As with soothing, bedtime routines should be started early, before sleepy signs change into overtired fussy signs. Pick and choose from the following list based on your child's age and your personal preference. Try to follow the same sequence at all sleep times.

1. Before sleep times, reduce the amount of stimulation: less noise, dimmer lights, less handling, playing, and activity
2. Bedroom should be quiet, dark, and warm, but not too warm
3. Bathe
4. Massage after bath with smooth, gentle motions
5. Dress for sleep
6. Swaddle if it comforts and relaxes your baby, use a warm blanket from the clothes dryer
7. Lullaby, quiet singing or humming – be consistent
8. Favorite words, sounds, or phrases – be consistent
9. Feed
10. May put down drowsy but awake, but do not deliberately awaken before sleeping
11. Do not rush in at the first sound your baby makes

## New Year Resolutions

Submitted by Brooke Gammie

Making new years resolutions is right around the corner.....why wait? While reading a new book on my nightstand, *BABY WISE* by Gary Ezzo, M.A. and Robert Bucknam, M.D., I came across an important topic: **ACHIEVING A BALANCE**. If you are like me, seeking a balance is something I am constantly striving towards. Here are a few suggestions for tackling the balancing act — a new years resolution in the Gammie Household!

- 1. Life doesn't stop once you have a baby.** It may slow down for a few weeks, but it should not stop entirely. When you become a mother, you do not stop being a daughter, a sister, a friend, or a wife. Those relationships, which were important before the baby, still must be maintained.
- 2. Date your spouse.** If you had a weekly date night with your spouse before the baby, get back in the swing of it as soon as possible. A friend or relative is quite capable of meeting your child's needs. The baby will not suffer separation anxiety from one night without mom. If you never have had a date night, start now!
- 3. Continue those loving gestures you enjoyed before the baby came along.** If you both enjoyed a special activity together, find a way to fit it in. If you buy a special something for baby, select a little gift for your mate as well. In all that you do, treasure your spouse.
- 4. Invite some friends over for food and fellowship.** Times of hospitality force you to plan your child's day around serving others as you work together to prepare your home for the guests.
- 5. At the end of each day, spend fifteen minutes sitting with your spouse discussing the day's events.** This special "couch time", which takes place before children are in bed for the evening, acts as a visual expression of your togetherness. To help keep this time free of interruptions explain to your children: "This is Mommy and Daddy's special time together. Daddy will play with you afterward, but Mommy comes first." Children actually are assured of mom and dad's love relationship through this tangible demonstration. In addition, couch time genuinely assists couples in sharing their needs and concerns with each other.

# Remembering Memories!

submitted by Brooke Gammie



Are you documenting special memories? Random things your toddler does? New feelings you experience as a mother? Moments in time that you would like to re-live at a later date? If you are a busy Mom like me, the answer is NO.....until I found this amazing journal!! It's called the **MOM's ONE LINE A DAY - A Five-Year Memory Book**; you can get it on Amazon.

You literally have room for 1-2 sentences / fragments, so there's no pressure of having to submit an entire journal entry to remember something special!

As an example, I have transcribed my "one-line-a-day" on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving:

*"Nov 20, 2012: One hour before we have to depart for the airport, Ben accidentally locked Payton in her car seat in the Subaru with London in the back. The fire truck + 6 firemen came to our rescue. I was nursing Henry while singing songs to P through the back window to keep the peace. 1st flight with 2 lap babies. Crazy!"*

This is one reason why now I am a devoted journal writer. I guarantee I would have always forgotten how many fireman came to our house and which Thanksgiving it was!

## Holiday Card Recycling

from Diddle Dots, Tips to Ease the Craziess of Parenting by Susie Garlick

Do you ever wonder what to do with all the holiday cards you receive during the month of December? If you are like me there is a humongous guilt that comes with throwing them away. In the past I would bag them up in hopes that "someday" I would put them into wonderful picture books to see each family as they had grown through the years.

A few years back I realized I had ten bags of holiday cards collecting dust and taking up space. I had not made any picture books; I had no time to make picture books; and I had not looked at any of the pictures since the day we received them in the mail. I have finally come to the realization that it would cost me all our children's college education money, months of work and way too much stress to put together picture books that I would not have time to look at anyway.

That was when I bought a beautiful, large tray that sits in the middle of our dining room table. It sits there 365 days a year and it is filled with the previous year's holiday cards. When we have guests over they look at them; when my kids are eating a snack at the table they look at them; and when I have a free minute I look at them. They get looked at more in a year than my bagged card did in ten years! At the beginning of the holiday season, I throw out the cards from the previous year to make room for the new cards. As they say, out with the old and in with the new.



# News & Events



## Spring Event - 2/16/13

Please mark your calendars for lots of family fun at NCPG's spring event on **Saturday, February 16 from 10-12 at All Saints' Day School.** Details to follow.

schedule a tour with your child or children, please contact the preschool office at (602) 840-8265 to set up a private tour.

4455 E. Lincoln Drive, Paradise Valley.  
[www.pvumcpreschool.org](http://www.pvumcpreschool.org)

## Thank You for Filling Out the NCPG Teacher Survey!

The results will be given to the teachers at the December 12th class. Your feedback is extremely valuable to us! It is the main way we evaluate the instructors and improve our classes.

## Help Support Your Class Reps by Signing Up to Organize a Play Date!

One of the biggest benefits of NCPG is the friendships we make. During class is such a hard time to foster relationships, so planning and attending playdates is important! Please reach out at your next class ; )

## Paradise Valley United Methodist Church Preschool Open House

Parents are invited to come tour Paradise Valley United Methodist Church Preschool and visit our classrooms on **January 23-24 from 9:15-11:00** at our Open House. Meet our staff and learn more about our classroom curriculum and programs for children 12 months through 5 years old. If you would like to

## SAVE THE DATE!

**"CORKS FOR KIDS"  
ANNUAL FUNDRAISER  
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**MARCH 9, 2013**  
**Phoenix Country Club**



We Need  
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***We need your silent auction items!!***

Please be thinking of your favorite restaurant, store, hair-stylist or just about anything you can donate to our silent auction! All deductions are 100% tax deductible. Please support NCPG by submitting your items for the auction!

Corks for Kids is our Annual Fundraiser & Party where you can have a night out with your spouse without the kids and enjoy a fun time with your fellow NCPG members. Socialize, party, and have fun bidding!

Please see Kori & Jennifer for official sponsorship forms and details!

- Kori.shapiro@yahoo.com, 602-690-6666  
- Jennifer@invericom.com, 602-377-8011

## Philanthropy *Thank you to all the members that have donated!*



Please help us brighten the holidays for those in need this December by bringing one of the items needed below for Toys for Tots and the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Maternity Program & Early Childhood Care Program. A collection box will be located in Nelson Hall before class where you can drop off the following items:

- New unwrapped toys up to the age of 12 for Toys for Tots
- Gently used infant car seats for the IRC
- Diapers for the IRC
- Sippie cups (new and used) for the IRC
- Kid's dinnerware & utensils (new and used) for the IRC
- Developmental toys (new and used) for the IRC



# Teach Your Kids Good Christmas Manners

Tavia Fuller Armstrong, Yahoo! Contributor Network

I love being a mom at Christmas. Seeing the magic of the holiday through my children's eyes makes Christmas so much more special. But Christmas can bring a lot of challenges to parents who are trying to instill good manners in their young children. I always wanted to raise gracious, polite, generous kids. I wanted them to have good manners all year round, so here are a few things I did to reinforce our family values at Christmas.

## Counter the advertisements

Children are especially susceptible to advertisements, and in the weeks leading up to Christmas, they are bombarded with the message that they need lots of must-have toys in order to have a happy holiday. You can counter the advertisements by turning off your TV and tossing out the toy catalogs.

One great benefit to tuning out the advertising is that your kids will be able to decide on their own what they really want for Christmas without being told what they should want by manufacturers and retailers.

## Talk about kindness

When Christmas arrives and your kids are opening the presents they received, their manners will be put to the test. Talk to them about how their actions might make other people feel, and the importance of being kind to the giver even if they don't particularly like the gift. Kindness and compassion are more important than anything wrapped up under a tree.

## Remind them not to pout

Is anything less attractive than a pouty child throwing a fit because they didn't get what they wanted for Christmas? Maybe, but you should still teach your kids not to indulge in such behavior.

Sometimes kids have good reason to pout. My mother told a story of her grandmother arriving at their house when she was a little girl with a car full of presents, but nothing at all for her and her siblings. All the gifts were for her cousins. That's a pretty good reason to pout, but she knew better than to do so because she had been taught to mind her manners even in the face of unkindness.

## Give back to the community

If you notice that your kids are greedy, pouty or otherwise exhibiting bad manners during the holidays, one of the best ways to reinforce good values is to give back to the community. Sharing time with the needy, helping the elderly or the poor may teach your kids to appreciate what they have and to realize how silly their undesirable behavior really is.

## Focus on the true meaning of Christmas

One of my favorite movies is "A Charlie Brown Christmas". I love the part where Charlie Brown finally loses it, and Linus reminds him and all the gang what Christmas is all about. If you celebrate the spiritual meaning of Christmas, the gift of Christ the Savior given freely to the world, share this blessing with your kids. I know of nothing that will help children remember the true meaning of Christmas more than focusing on why the holiday exists in the first place. And once they remember that, good manners are a lot easier to remember, too.

# Holiday Things to Do!

## The Nutcracker

Dec 07 - Dec 24, 2012 at Symphony Hall

A holiday celebration to share! Dancing toys, mischievous mice, waltzing flowers and sparkling snowflakes dance to Tchaikovsky's sumptuous score performed by The Phoenix Symphony. This holiday classic tells the story of Clara and her magical Nutcracker Prince as they embark on a thrilling adventure. Each year Ballet Arizona rings in the season with Ib Andersen's The Nutcracker, creating memories to cherish forever.



## Winnie the Pooh Christmas Tail

Through December 26

This Phoenix holiday tradition has been delighting Valley families for 17 years! Join Pooh, Piglet,

Eeyore and all their friends in the Hundred Acre Wood for a celebration of sharing and caring. *See it live on stage at the Valley Youth Theatre, 525 N. First St., Phoenix, 85004, [www.vyt.com](http://www.vyt.com)*

## Frances Smith Cohen's "Snow Queen"

Friday, December 14,  
12:10pm

Center Dance Ensemble's magical retelling of the Hans Christian Andersen classic to music by Sergei Prokofiev. A special one-hour abridged version of this "don't-miss" Valley holiday favorite.

*\*\$6.00, \*additional fees may apply. [www.herbergertheater.org](http://www.herbergertheater.org)*



## Junie B. Jones — Jingle Bells Batman Smells

Weekends until Dec. 23

Sat: 1 & 4pm, Sun: 1 & 4pm

Celebrate the holidays with the

irrepressible Junie B. Jones! The kids in Room One are gearing up for a celebration. But when Junie draws tattletale May's name for the Secret Santa giveaway she hatches a plan to leave her nemesis with a stinky old lump of coal. Based on Barbara Park's bestselling books, the hilarious Junie B. and her holiday hijinks will leave kids laughing for days. *Tempe Center for the Arts. [www.childsplayaz.org](http://www.childsplayaz.org)*



## Stillman-McCormick Railroad Park Holiday Lights

December 14th - January 5th, excluding Dec. 24th, 25th & 31st. 6:30p.m. – 9:00p.m.

Take a train ride through thousands of lights and a variety of holiday displays. Opening night festivities will begin at 6:30pm and include a tree lighting ceremony, entertainment and a visit from Santa. Santa will be at the park through December 23rd. *Train & Carousel rides are \$2 each. Children under 3 free with a paying adult. [www.therailroadpark.com/events](http://www.therailroadpark.com/events)*

## Phoenician Breakfast With Santa

Saturday, December 15

Each child will receive a complimentary digital photo as they visit with Santa. 9am - Noon. \$45 per adult, \$30 per child 3 - 12 years of age. *Reservations required, dial 480-423-2530.*

## Ritz Carlton Breakfast with Santa & Teddy Bear Tea

### Teddy Bear Tea

Hosted by Afternoon Tea Maitre d' Jeffrey Hattrick the Teddy Bear Tea is a memorable experience for all; adults enjoy a traditional afternoon tea while children nibble on kid-friendly sandwiches followed by teddy bear treats. Children also enjoy a visit from Ted E. Bear and story time with Jeffrey as well as selecting a teddy bear of their choice from The Ritz-Carlton Collection. *Fri.-Sun. until December 16. Seatings at noon and 3pm. \$38 per person. Royal Tea additional \$19, includes free-flowing sparkling wine throughout the tea service. Reservations: 602-468-0700.*

### Second Annual Breakfast with Santa

Join us for Breakfast with Santa and enjoy live music and carols, story time with Mrs. Claus, holiday puppet show, and playtime in the Holiday Village. Santa will say hello to each family and there will be a chance to get your photo with him! *Priced at \$39 per person. Thursday, December 20, and Friday, December 21. Seatings at 8:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. Reservations by calling 602-468-0700.*

## Phoenix Zoo Lights

Through January 6th, 6-10pm nightly

3.5 million lights, 600 displays!

*\$12 weekends/\$10 weekdays, children under 2 free. More info:*

*[www.phoenixzoo.org/events/zoolights](http://www.phoenixzoo.org/events/zoolights)*



## Las Noches de Las Luminarias

Starts Dec 9th at Desert Botanical Garden

8,000 hand-lit luminarias, warm cup of cider, the sounds of handbells ringing and Dickens Carolers. *\$25 for adults, \$12.50 for children (ages 3-12) (children under three are admitted free).*

## The Arizona Celebration of Lights

November 16 through January 6

Back... and bigger and brighter than ever before! We're still in the Phoenix Event Complex at 2209 North 99th Avenue in Phoenix and open every night of the week from *Open every night at 5:30pm. Friday, Saturday and holidays we close at 10:00pm and every other night we run until at least 9:00pm. We'll let everyone through even if there's a line of cars when we normally close.*

*[www.azcelebrationoflights.com](http://www.azcelebrationoflights.com)*



## CityScape Holiday Ice Rink

Through Sunday, January 6, 2013 in downtown Phoenix

Special deals with skate rental wristband at many CityScape locations (details at skate rental kiosk). Purchase beer, wine and hot chocolate from Chloe's Corner to enjoy in the park while watching the skaters. *Adult Skate every Saturday night from 9-11pm with DJs, ice dancers and more. \$12 rink admission includes skate rental.*

## Gingerbread House Contest

Through Monday, December 31, 2012.

See this year's entries in the annual Gingerbread House Contest at the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown Hotel, 340 North 3rd Street. The gingerbread houses will be created from completely edible material and this year's theme is "How The Grinch Stole Christmas".



## Wizard of Oz Gingerbread Village

Through Sunday, January 6, 2013.

The public is invited to the JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort & Spa in North Phoenix to see a dazzling masterpiece of gingerbread, gumdrops, chocolate and sugary icing. *Free.*

## Holiday Story Time with PBS at Desert Ridge Marketplace

December 12 and 19

Free hot chocolate and cookies, story time readings of holiday classics, and special guest characters presented by PBS. *Desert Ridge Marketplace, Phoenix. District Stage. Free admission.*



## Winter Wonderland Express at Enchanted Island

Saturday, Dec. 15 and Sunday, Dec. 16, 2012

Ride the Holiday Train ride to a snow-filled Enchanted Island. Play in tons of fresh snow and ride a sled. Visit with Santa Claus for free at the North Pole and enjoy a free cup of hot cocoa and free candy canes. *10 a.m. to 7 p.m. each day. Regular prices for rides and attractions apply.*

# Six Ideas for the Best Holiday Kids' Table Ever

by Rebecca French, [www.babycenter.com](http://www.babycenter.com)

*Between roasting the turkey, glad-handing the in-laws, and spiking the eggnog, it's easy to lose sight of the little ones underfoot at a holiday party. But we have some easy ways to make the children at your celebration feel special by making the kids' table the place to be. After all, happy kids equal happy grown-ups.*

## 1. MAKE CHALKBOARD PLACE MATS

With a jar of chalkboard paint and some recycled cardboard, you can create place mats that do more than catch crumbs – they keep the kids happily engaged during that long wait for dessert. Making these place mats costs less than half of what it would to buy them, and you can customize the size to fit your table. Another option is to cut a piece of cardboard the size of the whole tabletop and make a chalkboard topper.

- Six 14-inch squares of cardboard
- 8-ounce container of chalkboard paint
- Paintbrush

Apply one even coat of paint to each cardboard square. Allow to dry 1 hour. Apply a second coat and allow to dry 24 hours before using. For the party, set tins with chalk and pieces of cut-up sponge for erasers around the table.



## 2. KEEP THE KIDS BUSY MAKING PLACE CARDS

To keep kids away from hot ovens and frantic food preparation, send them into the backyard to collect pinecones. Then, have them decorate place cards with stickers and markers, and stick the cards between the scales of the pinecones to create nature-inspired placeholders. Have the bigger kids write each name with a bold marker and allow toddlers to scribble away.

Craft paper punches also make great snowflakes for sprinkling on the table.

- Pinecones
- Place cards
- Stickers
- Markers
- Craft paper
- Paper punches



## 3. COUNT THE KIDS IN ON THE TOASTS

Instead of everyday kids' cups (or disaster-prone glass ones), serve the kids milk, juice, or alcohol-free mocktails in plastic wine glasses. This small touch will make them feel like they're part of the celebration.

Kidsmartliving.com carries BPA-free plastic glasses. The short-stemmed Barcelona-style goblet pictured here is made from SAN plastic, which has a substantial look and feel and is more resistant to scratches, cracking, and breaking than acrylic. These goblets are also dishwasher-safe.



## 4. MAKE A BEAUTIFUL – BUT UNBREAKABLE – CENTERPIECE

Create a festive atmosphere with battery-operated candles, like these from Pottery Barn (\$12.50–\$34.50). They're made of real wax, but with an LED center, so there's no dripping and no danger.

To make a kid-proof centerpiece, surround three battery-operated candles with a cheery felted wool ball garland, like this one from [jamaligarden.com](http://jamaligarden.com). With no fire and unbreakable decorations, there's no worry – even at a table of rambunctious kids.



## 5. BRING ON THE DINNER GAMES

Inspire conversation by setting Family Dinner Beginner Games on the table. Older cousins and friends can engage little ones with games and activities printed on the 51 laminated cards. Bonus: Some cards even encourage kids to eat their veggies and drink their milk.



## 6. MAKE SURPRISE-FILLED TINS

The more diversions you add to the table the better. Activities keep kids entertained and at their seats, so the adult party doesn't get derailed. Create a surprise tin for each child and fill it with simple things to keep small hands busy: Depending on the ages of your guests, you could try Model Magic, block magnets, pipe cleaners, plastic animals, or a bag of beads and string. Or use stuff you find around your own house:

- Empty cans
- Sandpaper
- Decorative paper
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Surprises
- Parchment paper
- Ribbon

Make sure all cans are clean and free of sharp edges. If needed, sand any rough spots. Cut strips of decorative paper to fit each can and adhere to the can with glue. Fill the cans with small surprise objects. Cover the tops of the tins with paper circles cut from parchment and secure with ribbon.







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### Plastic surgeon Lawrence Shaw has been on a long journey.

Born and raised in Long Island, NY, Dr. Shaw completed his residency in Arizona. Something about our state stuck with him, and he stuck with us. Dr. Shaw has been in practice for 25 years and has been board-certified... twice and included in the guide to America's Top Plastic Surgeons.

With 14-year-old twins, much of his free time is spent with family attending sporting events, dance recitals and school activities. His 'alone' time is found at 4:30 a.m. where he dedicates his time to physical fitness. Dr. Shaw and his wife of 17 years still feel it's important to have a date night at least once a week. A previous passion of his, golf, is now on the back burner.

Over the last 25 years, Dr. Shaw has had a particular interest in non-invasive aesthetic medicine to accentuate and prolong the effects of plastic surgery and by itself to allow men and women to 'age gracefully.' One of Dr. Shaw's most popular non surgical procedures that he offers is CoolSculpting, a non-invasive, no downtime fat reduction procedure.

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## Imagine That! Summer Camp

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[www.imaginethatsummercamp.com](http://www.imaginethatsummercamp.com)

## Open House



Come tour our school, visit classrooms  
and enjoy our Open House  
**January 23-24, 9:15am-11:00am**



## PVUMC Preschool

**Paradise Valley United Methodist Church Preschool**  
4455 East Lincoln Drive, Paradise Valley, AZ 85253



**602.840.8265**  
[pvumcpreschool.org](http://pvumcpreschool.org)





# 10 Tips for Safer Holidays!

from [www.safetyathome.com](http://www.safetyathome.com)

During the holidays, fires cause more than \$18 million in property damage and holiday decorating injuries send more than 13,000 to the emergency room.<sup>[1]</sup> Help keep your family safe this season with these quick, simple steps.

1. Water, water, water your tree. Dry trees pose a fire risk – make a fresh cut on the base before putting your tree into a sturdy stand, and water frequently.
2. Check your lights, check them twice. Inspect all of your electric lights and decorations for damage or wear. Cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires and loose connections may pose a fire or shock hazard.
3. Plan your fire escape. Use the holidays as a good time to practice a fire escape plan with your loved ones. Identify at least two exits from every room in the house.
4. Sleep safe: Install carbon monoxide alarms. Be sure that at least one carbon monoxide alarm is installed on each floor of your home, and always close to sleeping areas.
5. Be flame aware. Always blow out unattended candles and teach your children to stay away from lit candles or fireplaces.
6. Give wrapping paper a second life. Don't burn used wrapping paper as it may cause intense flash fires. And throwing it out adds waste. Consider recycling or repurposing it instead.
7. Check extension cords. Do not connect more than three miniature light strings together. Also, be sure to check the rating on your extension cords and do not plug in more than the recommended wattage.
8. Steer your tree clear. Your tree should be positioned at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. It should also not block any doorways or exits.
9. Decorate with a safe eye. Do not run cords under carpets or tack up with metal nails or staples. Small decorations can be choking hazards so keep them out of the reach of toddlers.
10. Look for UL. The UL mark on a product means that samples of that product have been tested to the highest safety standards. Make sure to look for it to help keep your holidays safe and bright.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 2011

# Moms Making

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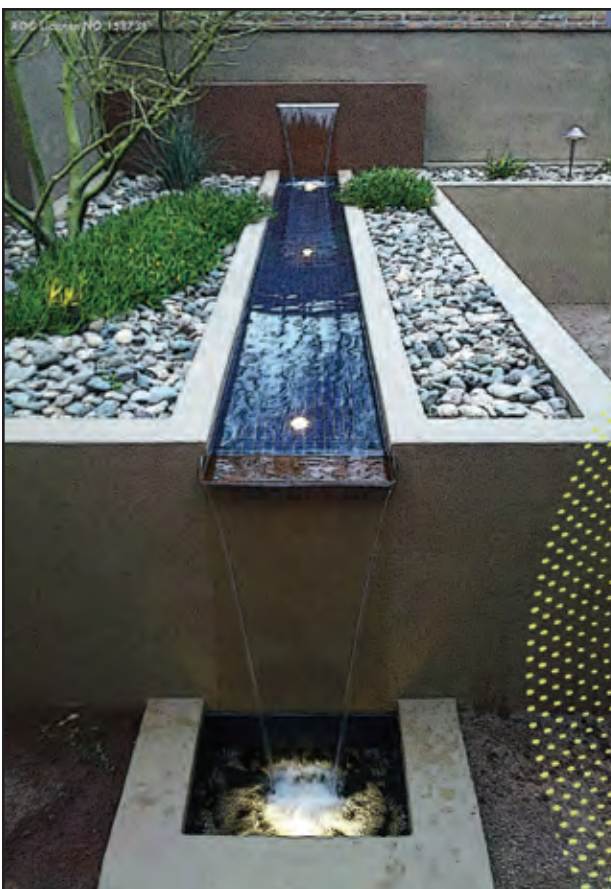
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# Cinnamon Applesauce Ornaments

[www.mommyskitchen.net/2010/12/cinnamon-applesauce-ornaments-crafty.html](http://www.mommyskitchen.net/2010/12/cinnamon-applesauce-ornaments-crafty.html)



## Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 - cups store bought applesauce
- 1 1/2 - cups cinnamon + more for dusting
- 1/8 - cup tacky glue (I used Elmer's)
- Ribbon, glitter, jewels or puffy fabric paint for decorating

## Directions:

Thoroughly mix all the ingredients together in a large bowl. If the "dough" is too dry, add more applesauce; if it is too wet, add more cinnamon.

Lay a piece of waxed paper or foil on the counter. Roll out the dough to about 1/8 inch thick (cut them more on the thicker side, so they will last for years). Cut out different shapes by using cookie cutters.

For the holes (use a straw) while the dough is wet. Lay ornaments on foil-covered pan and place in the oven on 170 degrees for 30 minutes. Remove from oven and dry for 24-48 hours. Use holiday ribbon to hang your ornaments on the Christmas tree.

Once the ornaments are completely dry you can pull out a few craft supplies to decorate with. Choose glitter, jewels, acrylic paint, white puffy fabric paint and clear Elmer's Glue to help things stick.

# Peppermint Bark

by Alison Needham, <http://family.go.com/food/recipe-an-798914-peppermint-bark-t/>

*Hands-On Time: 20 min*

*Cook Time: 1 hour*

*Ready In: 1 hour 20 min*

*Yield: 2 pounds of candy*

Why pay outrageous prices for peppermint bark in the store when it is so easy to make this holiday treat at home?

Packaged in a cute tin, it makes a wonderful gift as well. Kids love to help spread the melted chocolate and smash the candy canes for the topping.



## Ingredients:

- 1 package white chocolate chips, good-quality
- 1 package semi-sweet chocolate chips, good-quality
- 2 teaspoons peppermint extract
- 4 regular sized candy bars

## Directions:

1. Place candy canes in a freezer-strength ziplock bag and wrap with a dish towel. Using a heavy pan or a rolling pin, smash

candy canes to little bits on a sturdy, non-dentable surface (like the driveway, patio or garage floor...my kids love this part). Or you can chop them up in your food processor. Set aside.

2. Place the semi-sweet chocolate chips in a large microwaveable bowl. Heat in the microwave for 1 minute at 50% power. Stir. Heat again for 1 minute at 50% power. Stir until smooth and completely melted and almost room temperature. Alternately, you can melt the chocolate over a double boiler and remove to cool bowl and stir until chocolate is barely warm. Add 1 teaspoon of peppermint extract and spread chocolate on a baking sheet lined with waxed paper to about a 13 x 17 inch rectangle. Place tray in the freezer to set chocolate.

3. Meanwhile, melt white chocolate in the microwave for 30 seconds at 50% power. Stir. Heat for another 30 seconds at 50% power. Stir until chocolate is melted and smooth and cooled to room temperature. Stir in 1 teaspoon of peppermint extract. Remove semi-sweet chocolate from the freezer. Spread white chocolate over the top of the semi-sweet chocolate, all the way to the edges. Sprinkle with chopped candy cane bits and press them in slightly to make sure they stick. Return the pan to the freezer for about 15-30 minutes, or until chocolate is set. Snap candy into large shards and package as desired.

# Mom's Morning Out!

*What a wonderful morning at First Fig! We enjoyed breakfast at the gardens and saw an amazing presentation of gift ideas for the holidays made during the cooking demonstration. It was a lovely and fun morning for all that attended.*

