

Have yourself a Child-led Christmas!

At Christmas, settings can feel under pressure to turn into production lines of cards, calendars and parents' gifts!

Here are our top tips for keeping the children at the centre of open-ended seasonal activities.

- **Provide a wide range of resources** to support the children to explore as part of your continuous provision e.g. Christmas workshop areas.
- **Provide a wide range of materials for children to 'make, create and explore'**. This allows them to explore how they would like to mix, fix and combine. Include materials like sandpaper, bubble wrap, and natural materials. Set up an 'atelier' area with different textures/mediums for children to freely explore.
- **Provide opportunities for children to use their imaginations in role-play seasonal scenarios.** Create a 'Santa's Workshop' using construction materials bought and recycled, add some elves hats and tools for the children to explore building, joining and attaching. Or a stable with animal masks, scarves and other gifts support the children to re-tell stories.
- **Encourage multi-sensory exploration.** Create a winter wonderland in the water tray by adding frozen coloured ice shapes, a rubber glove is great for this. Help the children to explore as the ice melts. Create Christmas treasure baskets for babies to explore different festive items and textures.
- **Provide opportunities to explore sounds and movement.** Play recorded seasonal songs and music, provide instruments, scarves and fabric. Video or take photos of the children creating their own movement, songs and sounds. Invite parents to come and watch the recording with their children (Remember to gain parental permission!).
- **Provide opportunities to explore outside.** Using natural materials, encourage the children to make their own pieces of 'art' and photograph them, these can be used as gifts. Go on a seasonal sensory walk on a frosty morning to encourage the children to use all their senses as they discover cold, frost and ice!
- **ALWAYS allow children to choose if they would like to take part.** Remember you can always give the parents a photo of what the child is enjoying if they choose not to engage in Christmas activities.



- **Each child is unique; this does not change for the Christmas period.** If a child doesn't want to draw a picture, then why not use a photo of their favourite activity for their Christmas card or calendar? Maybe they prefer to make a model rather than a snowflake or handprint Christmas card (again!). When we paint a child's hand and print it on a card, there is no learning outcome for them. If a child wishes to paint their own hand (which often they like to!) then this is fine.
- Avoid making things that are mass-produced and all look the same.
- Take a picture or video and give this to the parent as part of their Christmas present.

Remember activities should be based around the child's choices and interests, Christmas is no different.