

Christmas

ACTIVITY BOOK



Festive activities,
printables,
and tips to help
kids and grown-ups
spice up the holidays



Christmas

ACTIVITY BOOK

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For:
**Grown
Ups**

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Seasonal Community Service:

Five Ways to Help During the Holidays

By Samantha Cleaver

Giving back never goes out of style. Despite all the new toys in stores and fancy holiday apps online, volunteer work remains one of the best ways to spend the season. In addition to fostering thoughtfulness, charity, and social skills, service-based learning teaches children how to identify and solve issues worth caring about. It's no wonder why they're so popular. "Anything that stretches a child to think about people who might have a tougher time helps develop empathy," says Dr. Michele Borba, EdD, parenting expert and author.

Executive director of the KIDS Consortium, Fran Rudoff, agrees. "As adults, we very often have an idea and we go right out there, plan the whole thing and plunk our kids into it and say, 'Isn't this great?' Kids want to be engaged in things that they're passionate about."

Try these five service learning projects with your family this year and make some memories that you'll never want to return.

Start at Your Stoop. Take a family stroll around the neighborhood and record your observations in notes, drawings or photos. Your child can identify what he likes and dislikes about the environment. Back at home, think of ways to improve the areas that could use some help. For example, offer to shovel a neighbor's sidewalk, or create a light display to beautify your street.

Greet Guests with a Holiday Map. Highlight what's great about your neighborhood by creating a brochure and map with all the awesome holiday light displays, and share it with your neighbors. If relatives are visiting, create a pamphlet with a map of your neighborhood for them. Include attractions like the best cafe to get hot chocolate!



Give the Gift of Time. Brainstorm organizations that address the social problems in your community, including libraries, the YMCA, homeless shelters, or nursing homes. Consider which cause is most important to your child, then help him brainstorm ways to help. You can visit the organization and interview the director to see how to apply your ideas. “Don’t make an assumption that an organization needs something,” says Rudoff. “Work with your child to come up with questions to figure out what they need.”

Campaign for a Cause. If your child has specific interests, connect with a local advocacy organization to find out what they’re advocating during the holidays. For example, if he has a green thumb, you could help a local non-profit sell organic wreaths or garlands, or rally for a home weatherization campaign. Then brainstorm ways to involve your community. Could you mention them in your family newsletter, or can you collect donations as part of the holiday wish list?

Donation Station. Reach out to The Salvation Army, Angel Tree, or another organization to find out what you can donate, and create a list of things to donate. The list might include your child’s favorite books to give to a foster care agency, or materials a teenager needs to pass time at a homeless shelter for the night. “We want kids to be gracious as opposed to greedy,” says Lisa Gache, founder and CEO of Beverly Hills Manners. “It’s all about encouraging kids to understand that the holiday season is about everyone.”

After you finish a project, help your child reflect on how he helped, what he learned, and how he can repeat the experience all year long.



Keeping Kids Motivated During the Holidays

By Anna **Weinstein**

All I want for Christmas is for my child to finish the year strong. If this sounds like your wish list, you're not alone. The three weeks leading up to that Holiday break is prime time for your child to come down with a serious case of distraction in school. What can you do to keep your child motivated this December?

The key is to remember that kids are motivated by different things, because kids are interested in different things. "Every topic can be made boring," says Alice Thomas, President and CEO of the Center for Development and Learning in Metairie, Louisiana. "And every topic can be made interesting."

Human beings are, by nature, motivated to learn. "The question is: are they motivated to learn what we want them to learn? It is up to adults to understand what individual children are most motivated by and to use that as a teaching experience," Thomas says. "It's the job of adults to make subjects active and exciting to children."

Teachers do this by giving students choice, building confidence, and relating the subject to areas of student interest. During times of year when students are likely to be more distracted, teachers often plan in advance to make their curriculum particularly exciting, such as a semester-long project that culminates in a group presentation.

Charles Smith, Professor and Extension Specialist in the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University, says a decline in student motivation is normal before winter and summer break. "It's hard for kids to keep the same level of enthusiasm and intensity all year



long,” Smith says. “But an experienced teacher knows how to engage students in the learning at the end of the semester or end of the year. And there are ways parents can engage their children, too.”

When it comes to motivation, children are similar to adults: the work must be meaningful. “Holidays or no holidays, children need to be interested in the topic in order to be motivated to do their homework and participate in the classroom,” Thomas says.

Here are a three pointers for working with your children to stay motivated and interested in school, even with holiday preparations under way:

Help children feel in control. Parents can help children take control of their learning by giving them choices. Children can choose which homework assignments to do first, whether they will play before or after their homework, and how many breaks they will take and when. Children can also gain control by recognizing that they can negotiate homework assignments with their teachers. If, for instance, your child is assigned to write about a topic she isn’t interested in, you can encourage her to think about what they she like to write about and then talk to the teacher to see if that would be acceptable. Thomas says nine times out of ten a good teacher will recognize the value of children being excited about their learning. If writing about a topic of interest achieves the same goals for the teacher, why not?

Help children feel confident. When children feel confident, they are more likely to be motivated. Parents can help boost children’s confidence by having them teach about what they are learning at school. “This doesn’t have to be artificial,” Smith says. “Often times, parents don’t know about some of the subjects, and the kids can actually serve a valuable role in teaching their parents.” At-home debates and educational games are also helpful when it comes to confidence building, as they provide a forum for discussion and allow for close interactions with parents. This in turn serves to strengthen children’s confidence as individuals and as learners.

Help children feel connected. Just like adults, children are more motivated when they feel a personal connection to something. Personalizing is an important critical thinking skill teachers work to develop in their students, often by asking open-ended questions that help students connect to text. You can take this to another level when it comes to your child’s school work. If your child complains about an assignment, ask open-ended questions to prompt her to think about how the assignment will be useful. Encourage her to think about how she can relate to the subject, or how she might use the skills she’s learning in other aspects of her life. Making learning social is another strategy regularly used in the classroom to help children feel connected, and parents can facilitate social learning at home, too. Talking to family members or neighbors about her experiences with a subject can serve to keep the learning interesting for your child.

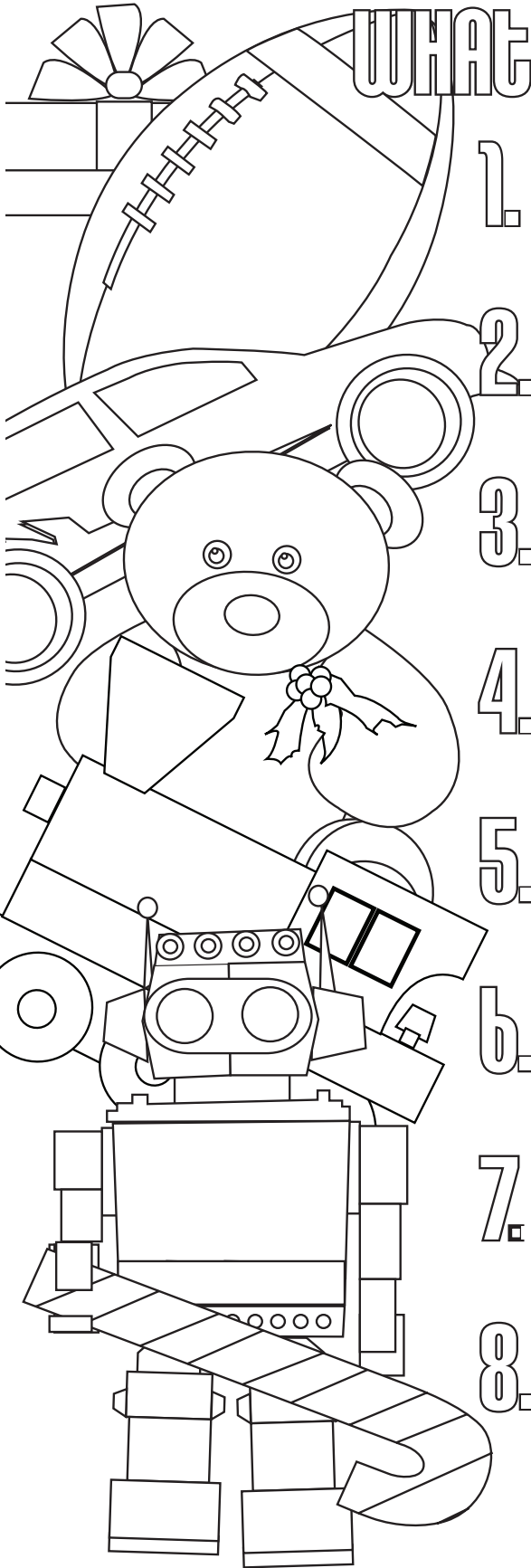
Children and adults need to feel in control, confident, and connected. With these three Cs lined up, motivation is sure to follow.



For:
Kids

For more worksheets and printables, go to www.education.com/worksheets.

WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

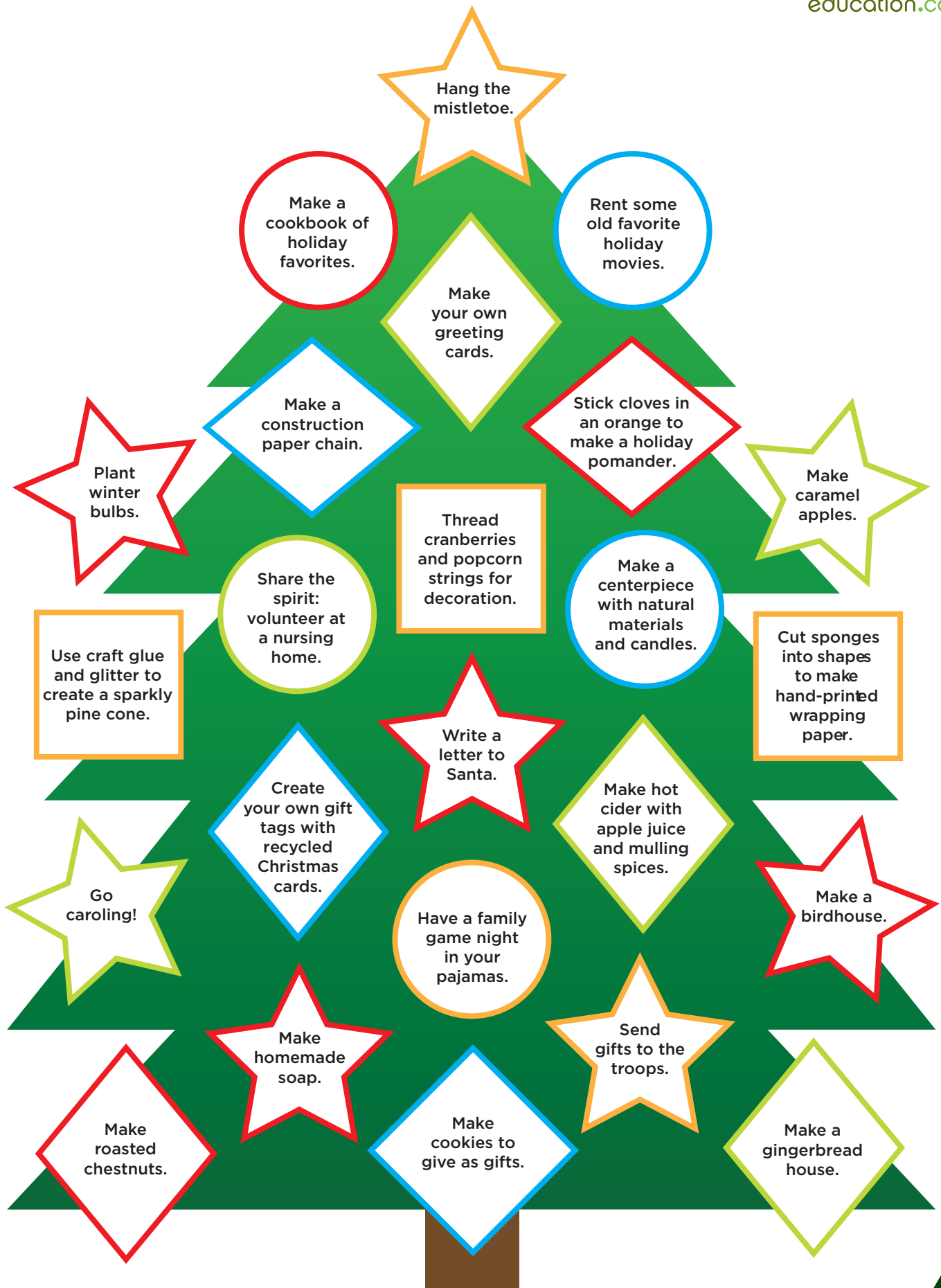
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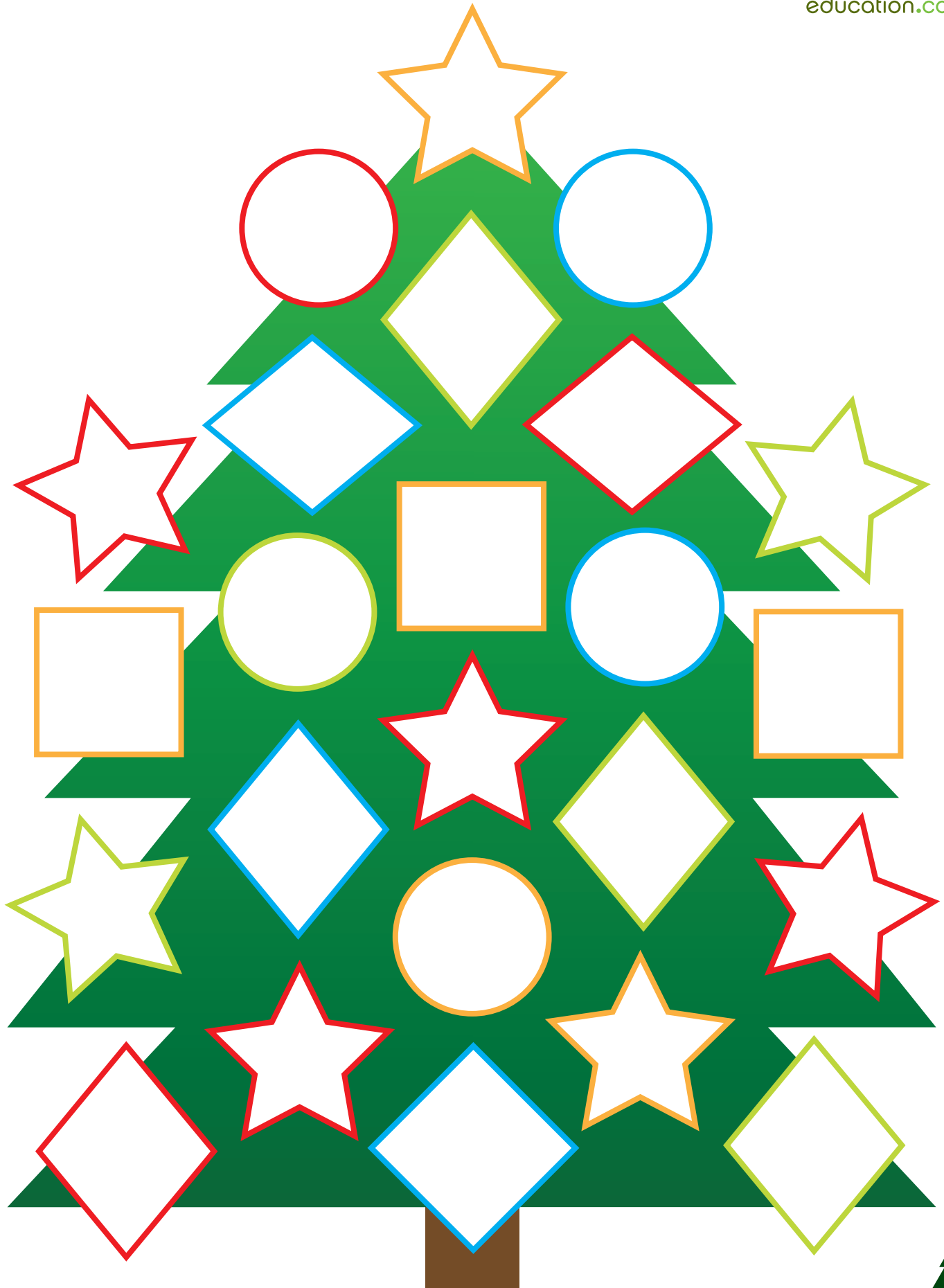
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Christmas Advent Calendar

1. Cut out the numbered shapes below.
2. Tape each shape to a matching shape on the Christmas tree. (Hint: Tape only the top of each shape so can still look underneath).
3. Look under one shape on each day in December and do the activity listed.
4. Enjoy the holiday season!





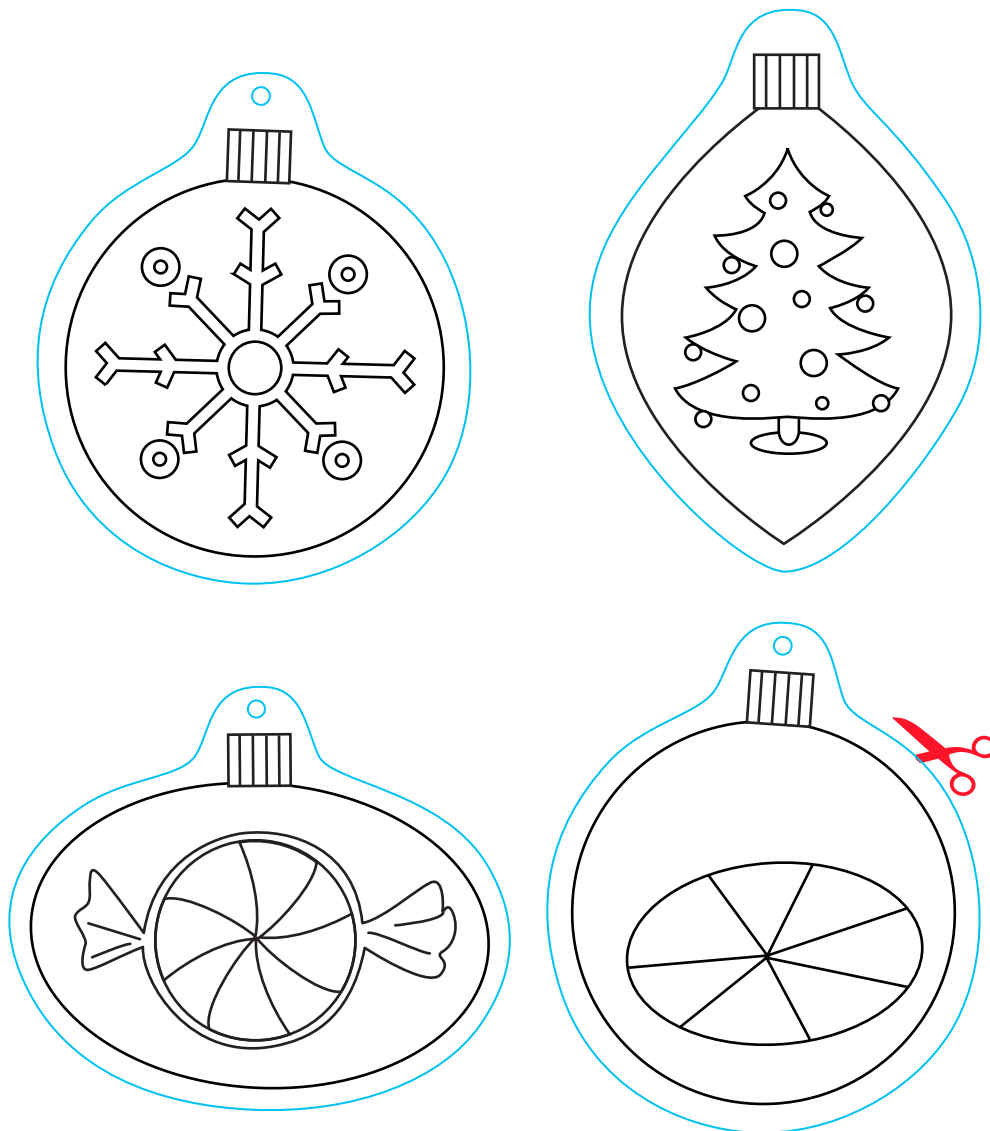


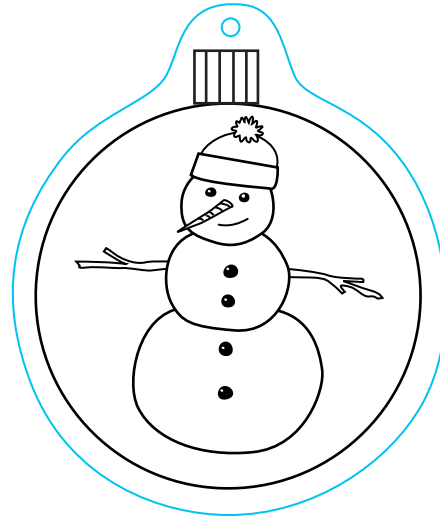
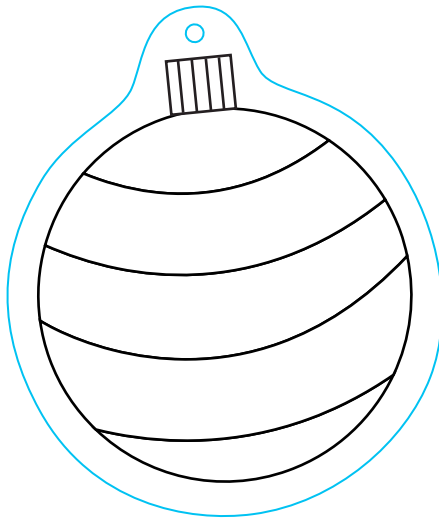
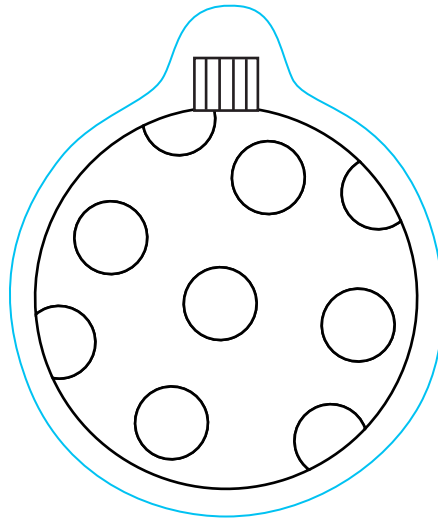
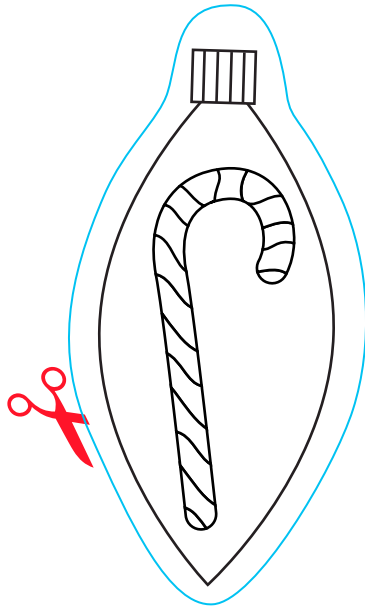
Printable Christmas Ornaments

Color these in and have a grown-up help cut them out to make these into ornaments. Put them on a tree, tie onto your backpack, hang one from a door knob, or even tie a couple onto the handlebars of your bike!

Poke a hole at the top of each ornament with a pen or pencil. Use string or a twist tie from a loaf of bread to complete your ornament.

Works best when printed on thicker paper.



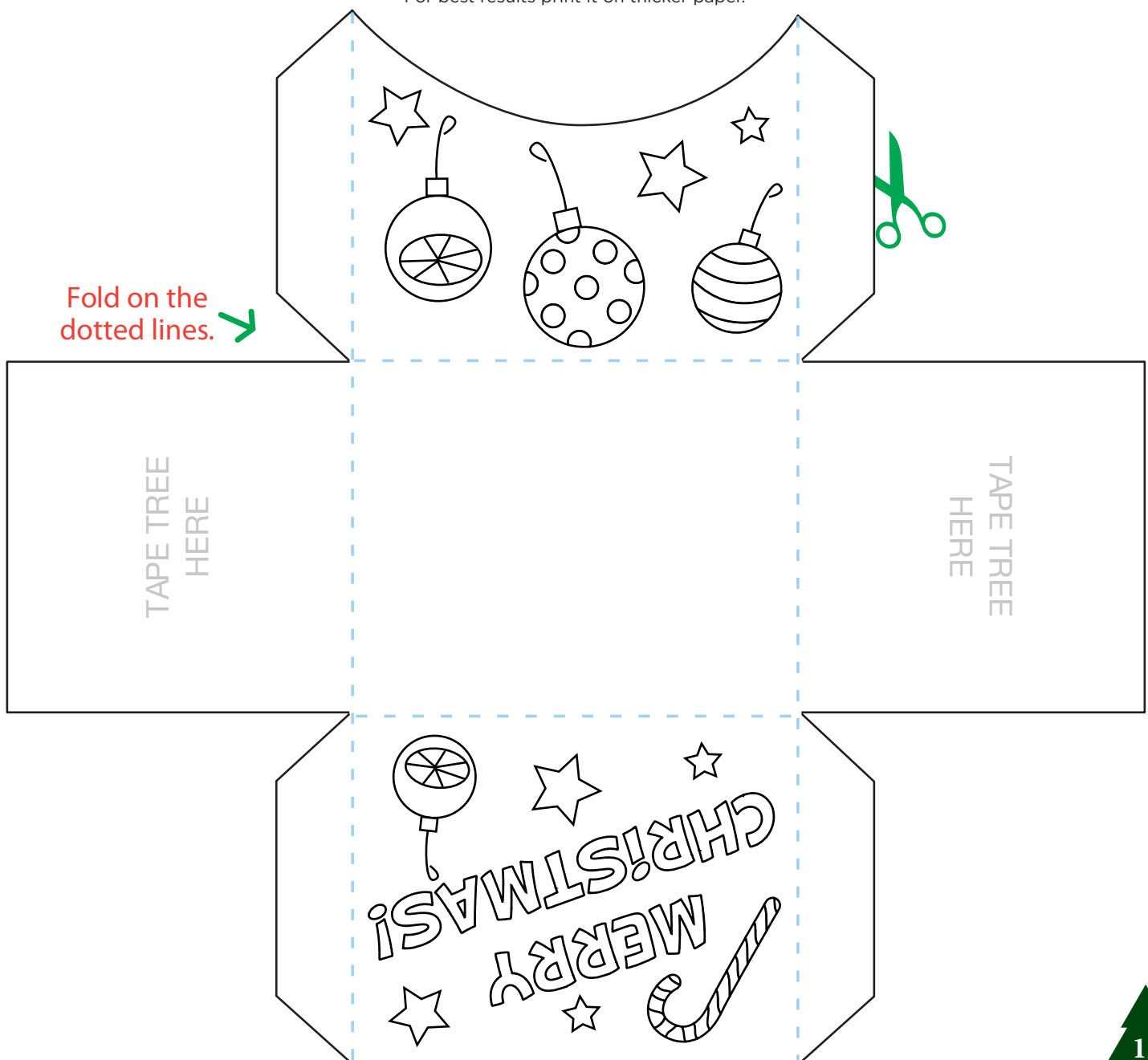




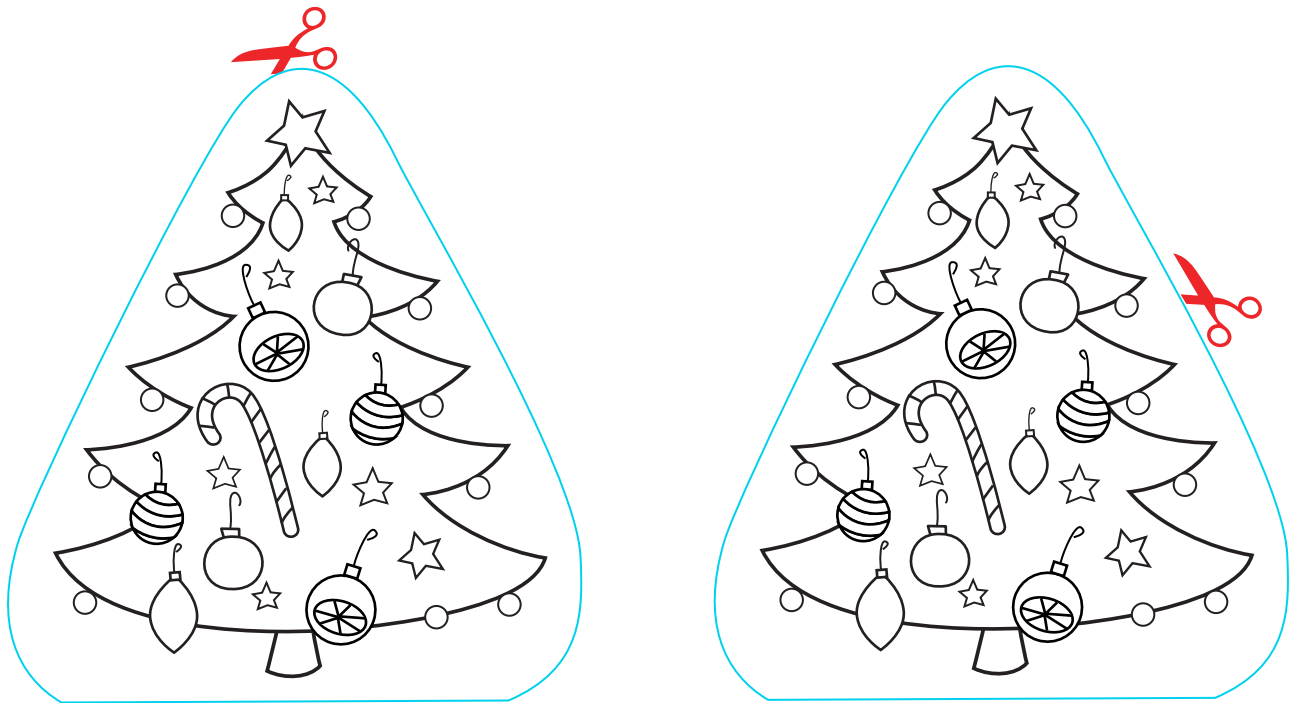
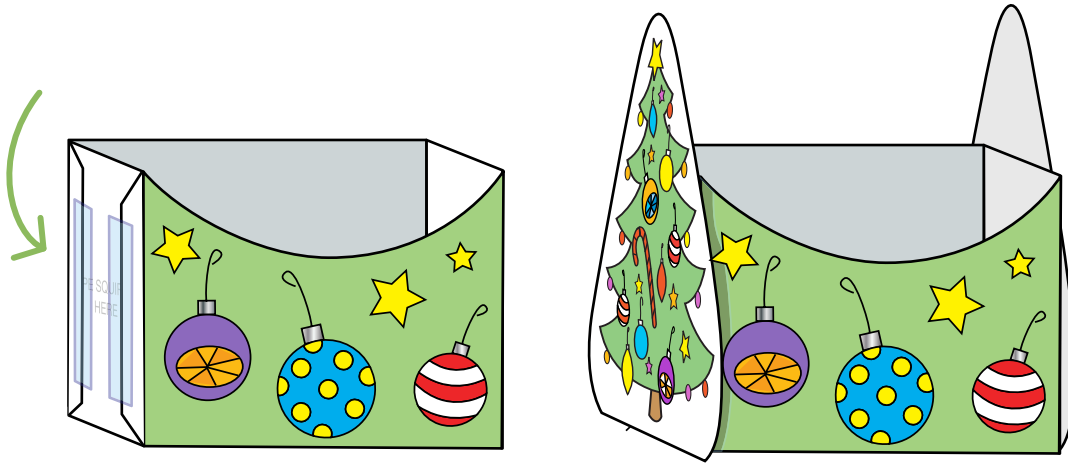
Christmas Crafts: Treat Cups

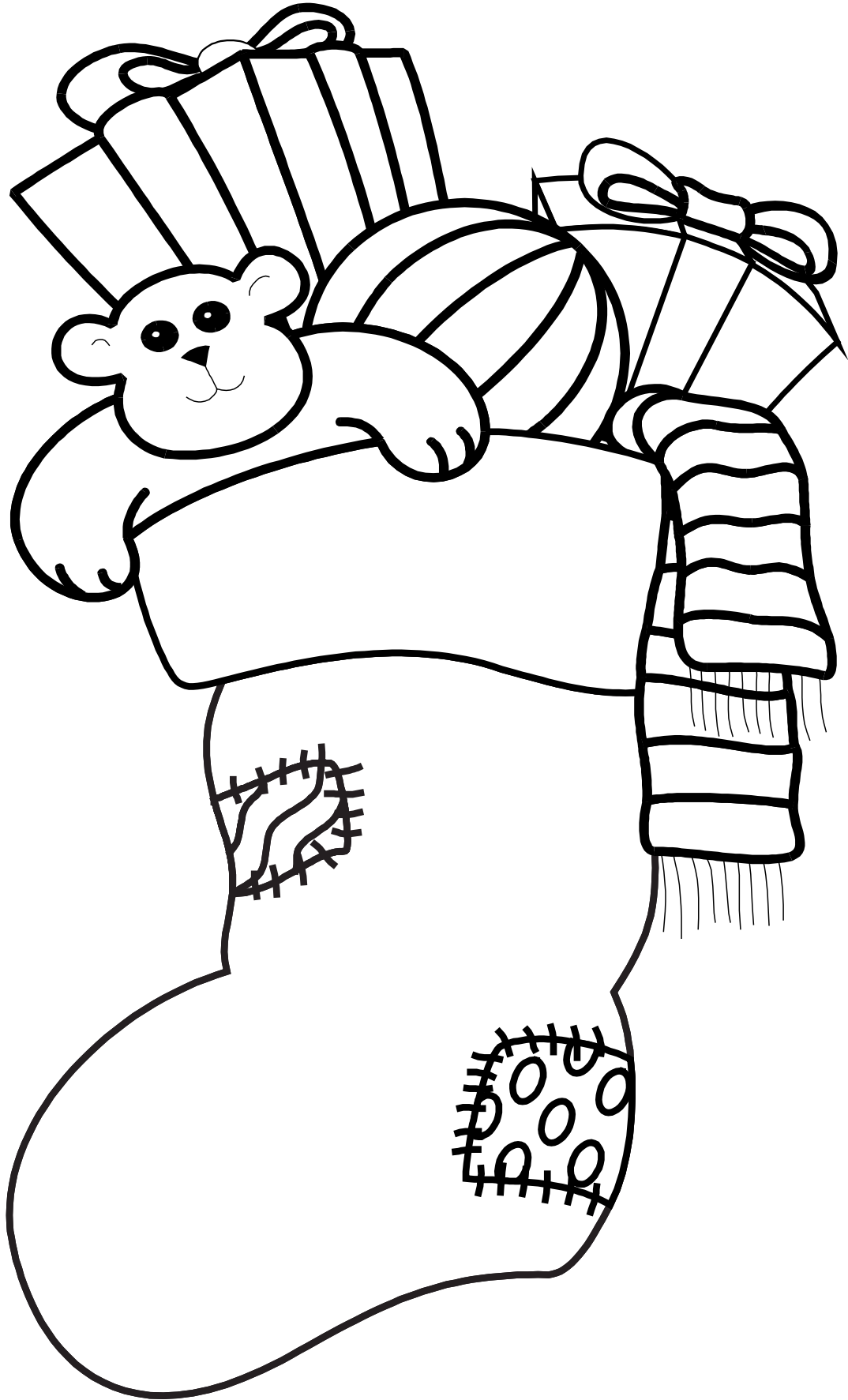
1. Color your Christmas treat cups on this page and trees on next page.
2. Have a grown-up help cut out and tape the box together.
3. Tape the trees on each short side.
4. Fill with your favorite candy!

For best results print it on thicker paper.



Tape the flaps on the outside of the box since the tree pieces will cover them.







For: **Families**

For more worksheets and printables, go to www.education.com/worksheets.



Create Thumbprint Christmas Cards

By Hannah Boyd

It's fun to receive photos of friends and family at the holidays, but it's even more fun to receive a card that someone actually made. These homemade thumbprint cards are as personalized as it gets, and your child will love using his prints to make holiday magic!

What You Need:

Plain white cards with matching envelopes (or white paper folded in half)
Non-toxic ink pads (in blue, green and brown colors, if possible)
Colored markers

What You Do:

1. To make snowmen: have your child dip his thumb in the ink, then press it to the front of the card. Repeat with his pointer finger, pressing directly above the thumbprint. Finish with the pink, pressing directly above the pointer finger. Use the magic markers to draw in a red scarf, a small hat, and arms. Write holiday message beneath.
2. To make reindeer: have your child dip her thumb in brown ink and make a thumbprint on the page. Draw two brown antlers above it, two dark eyes and a red nose.

3. To make a Christmas tree: have him dip his pointed finger in green ink and make prints on the paper in a triangle shape. Dip his whole thumb in brown ink, then press the whole thumb directly below the triangle. Decorate with different colored dots to look like ornaments, a star at the top, and presents beneath.

Not only will these hand-made cards make the holidays brighter for friends and relatives, your preschooler will also be practicing fine-motor skills and coordination, which form the foundation for writing!



Make a Hershey's Kiss Christmas Tree

By Dina Brooks

This counting activity will give your child the satisfaction of creating something that the whole family will “Ooh” and “Ahh” over during the holidays, and best of all, it’s edible! Using a cone shaped piece of Styrofoam as the form, your child can glue Kisses onto the “tree” using a low temperature glue gun. See how many Kisses it takes to make this yummy smelling and yummy tasting tree.

What You Need:

- Styrofoam cone
- Hershey's Kisses (Mint Truffle, shown here, is recommended because it's very aromatic, not to mention festive!)
- Low temperature glue gun with glue
- Fresh cranberries

What You Do:

1. Help your child put a large dot of glue onto the bottom side of the candy and adhere it to the cone, and then hold it in place for a couple of seconds.

2. Work your way from top to bottom or left to right all along the cone. Ask your child to count how many Kisses it takes to complete each column or row. This is great counting practice!
3. Repeat step 2 until the entire cone is covered in candy.
4. Allow the glue to dry completely before attempting to move the “tree” onto a platter.
5. Help your child transfer the “tree” from your workspace onto a platter and sprinkle cranberries all around the base for color. Be sure to have your child count the cranberries as he works. More counting practice!

Make a couple of these trees to dress up the holiday dessert table. A refreshing scent of mint will fill the area and the trees will be a festive touch to any decor. Just be sure to take a picture of your child’s handiwork before all of the Kisses are devoured!



Christmas Snow Globe

By Hannah Boyd

Is there anything more enticing to a young child than a snow globe? They're associated with holiday celebrations, with glitter and water, and most kids love them. Unfortunately, they're also expensive and delicate, a combination that often renders them off-limits to children. Here's a Christmas snow globe that your kids can not only play with - they can make it themselves!

What You Need:

- Clean jar with a water-tight lid (test it by filling it with water, turning it upside down, and holding it over your sink)
- Festive, waterproof figurine or holiday ornament that fits inside the jar
- Cork
- Knife
- Waterproof glue (such as superglue)
- Water
- Coarse glitter
- Ribbon
- Glycerin (optional: available at drugstores)

What You Do:

1. Trim the cork so one piece is just taller than the jar lid. Discard extra cork.
2. Remove the lid from the jar and set jar aside.
3. Put the lid upside down and help your child affix the cork piece to the center with a dab of waterproof glue.
4. Glue the figurine, bottom down, to the cork (if you're using a little person as the figure, glue the feet to the cork). The cork is a platform that will allow the figurine to show above the rim of the lid, and the lid will eventually be the bottom of the snowglobe.
5. Let cork and figure dry completely.
6. Have your child add a few dashes of glitter to the jar, along with a few drops of glycerin if you'd like the glitter to fall slowly.
7. Help your child fill the jar almost to the top with water.
8. Screw lid back on jar, so the figure is pointing down. Reverse the jar so the figurine is right side up.
9. Tie a ribbon around the jar lid and knot decoratively.
10. Have your child shake gently and watch the glitter fly! Watch carefully for leaks and store on a waterproof saucer, just in case.

Not only is this homemade globe a hit for kids, it also makes a great holiday gift for friends and relatives, so stock up and make several!