

Budget Christmas Crafts

Christmas Cards

All you need is some paper or card, scissors, glue, pens or pencils and whatever materials you would like to use to decorate it. Thinking of everyday items you may have at home – you could cut up old wrapping paper, magazines or junk mail, either cutting out the pictures to stick on the card or cutting out Christmas shapes such as trees or stars. Children may need help to do this, so using a stencil or cookie cutter to draw the shape on the paper first may be useful for them to try cutting round.

Don't worry if the design is not what you would call "perfect" - it is to your child! They have used their creativity and imagination to design a card, however messy it might look to you, so please value what they have made!

Encouraging your child to write inside the card is also very valuable. What may look like scribble is your child learning that marks carry meaning. In order to mark make, they are learning to control their fine motor skills as well as learning about cause and effect.

Toilet/Kitchen Roll Tube Characters – Father Christmas, Snowman and Elf

You can use empty kitchen and toilet roll tubes, but you could also try empty crisps or sweets tubes or empty till rolls. They can be covered in crepe paper, wrapping paper, drawing paper, or you could paint or colour them to make them your required background colour.

Can you find odd bits of material, felt, paper etc to make the different clothing. You could see what scraps of material or paper you have lying around that could be used. Odd buttons could make great eyes, or if you have any stickers, these could be used as decorations.

Cotton wool makes good fluffy beards or for making a textured snowman and wool or string could be used as belts, hair, or scarves.

Let your imagination go wild and think up a whole host of characters to make, perhaps all the Nativity characters - Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, Shepherds, Wise Men, Angels etc.

Paper Plate Decorations

If you have any paper plates left over after a party, there are a whole host of creative ideas. You could make paper plate faces, Christmas trees, Angels, or treat cones.

Plate Faces – decide whose face you want. Maybe Father Christmas or a snowman.

Christmas Trees – Paint the back of the paper plate green, or colour it in or stick some green paper over the top. Then you cut into the middle of the plate and pull the edges to make a cone shape, which you fix once it is at your desired size. You can then decorate with glitter, sequins, stickers, tinsel etc. You might like to make a star to go at the top of the tree.

Angels - these can be made by cutting a paper plate into quarters for wings and adding a face. Or if you have any old doilies, these also make great angel wings!

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Table Centrepieces

Use up old fruit punnets by turning them into beautiful centrepieces. You could either use old tinsel or go outside and scavenge for natural materials such as moss, leaves, twigs and feathers.

You could wrap the plastic punnets in old wrapping paper or decorate them with stickers if you wish. Then cover an empty tape roll (you could use an old toilet roll) in foil and stick on flame shaped paper to the top to make it look like a candle. This is fixed to the centre of the plastic punnet and then fill in the space around it using tinsel or natural materials.

For a small table, try using an empty till roll and filling it with tinsel and a twig and attach a fluffy robin to it with glue dots (or glue or sellotape – the glue dots are just more invisible).

Reindeer Hats

You could use brown card, but you could change the colour depending on what animal hat you decide to make. Draw round your hands on brown card or paper or colour them in afterwards and cut them out to make antlers. Some old red material could be cut up to make a red nose and we draw on eyes, but you could use buttons, sticklers or googly eyes or pom poms.

Christmas Stockings

At home you may like to cut out pieces of fabric and sew or glue them together to make a stocking. These can be decorated with felt tip pens, stickers, sequins or bits of ribbon you may have lying around.

Alternatively, you can cut one out of paper or card and then cut out pictures from old magazines or shop catalogues, to make a wish list of items you would like for Christmas.

Robins/Christmas Puddings

You need: a brown sock, string, scissors, glue or double sided tape, eyes, sequins, ribbon or material, rice and /or stuffing, pom pom (optional)

Turn the sock inside out. Cut a straight line just above the ankle part of the sock. Take the long length of sock, tie one end with string and turn inside out again, it should be the correct way round now.

Fill with rice at the bottom and then some stuffing. If you are doing this at home, you could use old socks as stuffing or fill entirely with rice. Do NOT over fill as you need to tie the open end with string.

Twist the neck of the robin and tie with string then tie the open end with string.

Now get creative to add details to your robin – you could use felt or paper to give a red breast and wings, sequins or googly eyes for the eyes and pipe cleaners for the feet. If you don't want to make a robin, you could turn it into an owl or a Christmas pudding

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Christmas Crackers

You need: cardboard tube (old empty toilet roll or kitchen roll cut in half), crepe, tissue or wrapping paper, gift to go inside, ribbon and stickers or sequins to decorate, if wanted

Put a bag of sweets inside your cardboard tube (empty toilet or kitchen roll) and wrap with crepe paper, longer than the size of the tube. Tie ribbon around each end of the paper, just past the end of the inner tube, allowing some paper to extend past the ribbon. You can decorate the outside of the cracker with stickers, if you wish.

At home, you can always add mottos, jokes or pictures to the inside, along with the sweets, or have a go at making paper hats to put inside.

Decorations

You need: paper, card, scissors, sellotape or glue.

You may like to make a paper chain, snowflake or garland.

Paper chain – cut paper into strips about 2cm wide. You could use left over wrapping paper or pages from magazines. Fold into loops and either sellotape or glue the end closed, then link the next strip onto this one and seal the ends together. Carry on repeating these steps until it is as long as you want it.

Snowflake – fold a square piece of paper in half, and half again and then fold again into a triangle. Cut some holes out along the folded line and then open out the paper to see the patterns you have made. You could try using pattern scissors to create different shapes.

Snowman

You need: a white sock, string, scissors, glue or double sided tape, eyes, sequins, ribbon or material, rice and /or stuffing, pom pom (optional)

Cut a straight line just above the ankle part of the sock. Put the foot part of the sock to one side as you will need this later to make the hat.

Take the long length of sock, tie one end with string and turn inside out.

Fill with rice at the bottom and then some stuffing. If you are doing this at home, you could use old socks as stuffing or fill entirely with rice. Do NOT over fill as you need to tie the open end with string.

Twist the neck of the snowman and tie with string then tie the open end with string.

Roll up the remaining part of sock to form a hat and stick to the snowman

Now get creative to add details to your snowman – you could use buttons, sequins or googly eyes and bits of ribbon or material to make a scarf. How about adding a pom pom to the top of the hat? Can you make yours look like Olaf?

Wreaths

Cut off the edge of a paper plate and then add stickers or cut out holly leaves from green paper and hang them up!

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Christmas Eve Box

Instead of spending lots of money on buying one, why not recycle an old shoebox. You could involve your child by getting them to help you decorate it. You could use wrapping paper, or plain brown paper and then stick on pictures cut out by your child (from old Christmas cards, wrapping paper, magazines etc)

If you have glitter glue and old tinsel, you could stick these on too to make it sparkle and shine. Don't forget to add a label - you could cut out pictures from old Christmas cards and use these. Try using patterned scissors for a different finish.

You don't have to fill it with expensive items – try a bag of Snowman soup (a hot chocolate sachet, candy cane and mini marshmallows); a Christmassy activity or story book – try looking in charity shops for good quality second hand ones; include a song sheet of Christmas songs you could sing together, with pictures to help your child recognise the song (please ask if you would like any suggestions); a biscuit or treat (perhaps you could make and decorate some gingerbread biscuits or mince pies and use one of these).

Cooking

Try cooking together. Maybe you could make mince pies (ready to roll pastry is not too expensive and you could invest in a small jar of mincemeat). Homemade mince pies can make a tasty gift for someone. You could package them in an old plastic takeaway container, using a festive napkin to line the box and then decorate the box with stickers.

Or if you feel that's too messy, you could pre-cook some cakes or biscuits and let your child help you to decorate them, although be aware that more icing and decorations will go in your child's mouth, than actually on the cake or biscuit!

Gingerbread recipe (make it vegan by using a non-dairy butter or spread)

100g butter cut into lumps

½ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

1 teaspoon cinnamon

2 tablespoons golden syrup

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1 tablespoon black treacle

1 tablespoon water

220- 280g of plain flour (depending on consistency desired)

Put sugar, syrup, treacle, water and spices in a pan. Bring to the boil, stirring all the time. Remove from heat and stir in butter and bicarbonate of soda. Stir in the flour bit by bit, until you have a manageable, but sticky dough. Leave in a cool place for approximately 45 minutes and pre-heat the oven to 180C/Gas mark 4.

Roll out the dough on a lightly floured board and cut out the gingerbread shapes.

Arrange on a greased baking tray and cook for approximately 10 minutes or until they feel slightly firm when lightly pressed. Allow to cool before decorating.

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Easy Cupcake Recipe

100g self-raising flour

100g caster sugar

100g of butter/margarine

2 eggs

½ teaspoon of baking powder

½ teaspoon of vanilla essence

(for chocolate cupcakes, omit the vanilla essence and add cocoa powder to your taste)

Put all the ingredients in a bowl together, mix thoroughly and then spoon into cake cases and bake in an oven approx. 180C for about 15 mins, until the cakes are golden brown and firm.

If your child helps you to do the baking, encourage them to help with weighing ingredients, point out the numbers of the scale. Do you need more or less of an ingredient? You can talk about how long they will take to cook, how will we know when they are ready? What does your child think they will look like? Look at the change in state from a runny liquid mixture to a solid cake or biscuit.

Plain Biscuits

225g s/r flour

pinch of salt

125g butter

100g caster sugar

1 beaten egg to mix

1 tsp of mixed spice

Sift flour, mixed spice and salt into a bowl. Rub in butter finely and add sugar. Mix to a very stiff dough with beaten egg, adding a 1/4 at a time. Turn out on a lightly floured surface, knead gently until smooth

Wrap in cling film and chill for 30 minutes.

Roll out thinly, then cut using a cutter of your choice. Transfer to a greased baking sheet and prick with a fork, bake for 12-15 minutes at 160°C until pale gold.

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Salt dough

You could also try using salt dough to make decorations. Don't forget to put a hole in the bit you want to hang up, before putting it into the oven to cook! You could use cookie or playdough cutters to make decorations or your imagination!

Easy salt dough recipe

300g flour

200ml water

300g salt

2 teaspoons oil

Either bake at a low temperature in the oven for up to 3 hours, or you can try microwaving them, but just do it for short bursts, until they are hard. Depending on the size and shape, it may take up to 3 minutes. If they are still soggy after this, try putting them back in for 10 seconds at a time.

To decorate, use acrylic paint or add 1 part PVA glue to 2 parts ordinary poster paint. You can add glitter to the paint to make a sparkly effect, if wanted.

Playdough

Or make some playdough and add some herbs or spices to make it smell. We have tried mixed spice, cinnamon and ginger.

500g plain flour

250g salt

15g (approx. 3 rounded teaspoons cream of tartar)

1½ tablespoons vegetable oil

450ml of water

Colouring/flavouring

Sieve the flour and cream of tartar into a saucepan, add the salt and oil and put on a low heat. Add the water/colouring/flavouring a bit at a time and keep stirring until it thickens. Turn out onto a work surface and allow to cool for a few minutes before kneading.