

Christmas on a budget

So what are you getting your children getting for Christmas? The Sphero Stars Wars BB-8 Droid or the Sony PlayStation 4? Or maybe the Kidzroom Action Cam or the Playmobil Hospital? Or is it none of them? Although you'd love to be able to buy one or more of these for your children, you simply can't afford it.

If the expense of Christmas is getting in the way of it being a joyous family occasion, it might be time to reconsider your child's 'needs' and ask yourself what you can do to create a happy Christmas on a budget. Here are some ideas:

- **Ditch the guilt.** TV ads will tell you exactly what your child should have this Christmas. And if you have young ones in school, they will probably pile on the guilt by telling you that 'everyone else' is getting these things. Try not to be swayed by this – it's not true! Remember that toy they simply had to have which was abandoned by 1 January and has gathered dust on the shelf ever since!
- **Keep it simple.** Parents often say that their babies and toddlers love the wrapping and packaging more than expensive toy inside. Chewing and scrunching the wrapping paper, sitting in or bashing a big box is all great fun. So why not dig out that huge box you've got in the loft or ask a shop for one they are throwing out, fill it with blown-up balloons and wrap the whole thing in Christmas paper. Toddlers will love playing in it.
- **Click and search.** There are often substantial differences in prices, so if there's one specific present you really want to get, go online and compare prices so that you can buy it where it's cheapest.
- **Cost doesn't count.** Love isn't expressed by the amount of money you spend. What a child needs to know is that you have taken their true likes and dislikes into account, and this could mean that you give them a gift that's not expensive. Use charity shops whenever you can. As well as knowing that the money you pay is going to a good cause, remember that as long as the present is clean and in good condition, it doesn't matter how much it costs.
- **Be creative.** If you have a bent for making things, put your hands to work on something for your child. For example, knitters can make jumpers with favourite character on and woodworkers can make a garage or doll's house. Your child will appreciate being given something that's been made with love, especially for them.
- **Plan ahead.** Buy bargains as you see them, throughout the year. This spreads the cost, and it also means you can pick up things cheaper than they would be in December. Keep this in mind for next year!
- **Avoid the 'big' food shop.** Buy food for Christmas over the previous few weeks or even months so that you don't have to do it all in one stressful shopping frenzy. Getting in non-



perishables, tinned and frozen food a little bit at a time means that you can spread the cost and get what you need at the best prices. In addition, it's worth taking an hour or two to plan the meals that you'll be having over Christmas so that you buy only the items you need.

- **Save the pennies.** As Christmas draws nearer, set yourself the challenge of not buying that coffee on the way to work or walking rather than taking the bus, and put aside the money you would otherwise have spent. That can be your child's Christmas pot! The money you need for a particular present will accumulate bit by bit.
- **Think about others.** As a family, you could sponsor a child in another country or find a similar way to help your children realise that others have much less than themselves. This might turn their eyes outward and make them realise how much they've got – even without that expensive present!

Remember that more than anything else the best gift that we can give your children is your time. Fancy toys may be exciting, but eventually the thrill fades away, memories last for ever.

Have a very happy Christmas!



Care for the Family's aim is to promote strong family relationships and to help those who face family difficulties.

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