

Your Complete Holiday Season Planner

Use this checklist to stay organized as you get ready for Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and New Year's



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Yes, it's that time of year already. Thanksgiving will be here soon, and Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa and New Year's are on the horizon. You may have already booked holiday flights or started buying a few gifts. Now it's time to get going in earnest on holiday preparations. Our holiday season planner will help you stay on top of what's important to you so you can enjoy this special time of year.



Early to Mid-November

- **Book travel.** Decide where you and your family will be for Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year's. If you're going to be traveling but haven't yet made arrangements, take care of them now, reserving plane tickets, lodging, car rentals and restaurant tables. If you're eating out locally on a holiday, you'll also want to reserve a table in advance.

Simple Pleasures: Savoring the Season of Warmth and Light



- **Make plans for pets.** If your “fur children” won’t be traveling with you, or if they don’t do well with a house full of guests, contact a pet sitter or boarding facility to reserve a spot.

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Photo by Sara Cooper

- **Mark your calendar.** Note dates of holiday parties, concerts and programs you plan to attend at your children's schools, your church, your workplaces and your social clubs. Decide on parties you plan to give, and contact professionals who might assist. Add other favorite holiday events, such as Christmas craft fairs, a *Nutcracker* ballet performance, a Handel's *Messiah* singalong concert or a designer show house.

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- **Save the date.** Are you planning to host Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa or a New Year's party? Write up invitation lists and contact people you hope will attend.
- **Think turkey.** If you're cooking for Thanksgiving and will roast a fresh turkey, order one now from your grocer.

Make Your Checklist for Entertaining Season



- **Write out your gift lists.** Set your holiday gift budget. Create a list of everyone you want to buy or make gifts for. Collect your family members' wish lists and distribute to relatives who need shopping ideas.
- **Share the news.** Update your holiday card mailing or email list. Choose or set up a family photo for your holiday card or newsletter. Order or buy Christmas cards. If you send out a newsletter, start writing up the highlights of your year.

8 Creative Home Backdrops for Holiday Photos



- **Extend a hand.** Do you take on any special volunteer duties or do any charitable giving during the holiday season? Consider contacting a soup kitchen or shelter to see how you can contribute to people in need.

Good Neighbors Make Her Street Feel More Like Home



- **Organize your gift wrap.** Take an inventory of your gift-wrapping supplies. Buy or make gift wrap, ribbons and bags.
- **Get an early start.** Start your shopping now to take advantage of sales, get the best selection and beat the crowds. To save time later (and prevent the curious from uncovering gifts), wrap presents as you go.
- **Be a good guest.** Buy or make host gifts to take to holiday gatherings.

Gift Wrap Ideas That Add a Personal Touch



Week Before Thanksgiving

- **Get your house in order.** Clean your house, paying special attention to any rooms guests will spend time in, including living areas, bathrooms, guest bedrooms and the kitchen.
- **Make it cozy.** Arrange your furniture for entertaining and add seasonal touches to your living areas and porch. Make sure your fireplace is in good working order and you're stocked with firewood if you plan to use your fireplace during the holidays.

10 Steps to Pulling Together Your Living Room Before the Holidays

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- **Take it outside.** Sweep, rake and clean up your porch, patio and yard. Freshen up your outdoor decor with [fall containers](#) and a door wreath.

[Simple Ways to Spruce Up Your Home for Thanksgiving](#)



Timberpeg

- **Get ready for guests.** If you will be hosting overnight visitors, prep the guest room and check your **bed linens**, **towels** and other necessities to make sure everything is in good shape. Clear out space in closets or drawers for guests to store their things.

The Polite House: How to Set Up an Extra-Special Guest Room



INTERIOR FOCUS

- **Plan your menus.** Decide what you will cook for Thanksgiving and other holiday meals. Write out shopping lists.
- **Stock up.** Check your pantry and buy any needed nonperishables, including wine and spirits.

Your Guide to Stress-Free Thanksgiving Prep



- **Take an inventory.** Make sure you have all the dishes, glasses, cookware and bakeware, utensils, candles and linens you need for the holiday season. Buy or replace any missing or damaged pieces. Do you have enough chairs and tables for your guests? Borrow, rent or buy extras if needed.

Smooth Running: How to Keep the Pantry Organized



Thanksgiving Week

- **Shop.** Buy perishables, saving salad fixings for a day close to the meal. Purchase floral arrangements and plants. Pick up your fresh turkey.
- **Defrost.** If you'll be cooking a frozen turkey, pick it up and start defrosting it, allowing 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds.
- **Cook and bake.** Start prepping food, cooking and baking.

Your Guide to a Simpler Turkey Day



- **Prep the table.** Iron your tablecloth and napkins. Ready your candles and centerpiece.

6 Easy Fall Centerpieces



Day Before Thanksgiving

- **Buy last-minute food items.** Do any last grocery shopping.
- **Cook.** Chop vegetables and cook anything else that can be prepared in advance.
- **Set the table.** Lay out place settings for your Thanksgiving table and put the finishing touches on decor.

13 Ways to Make Your Thanksgiving More Meaningful



Vincent Greene Architects

Thanksgiving Day

- **Finish cooking.** Get the turkey into the oven, make salads and whipped cream, and cook potatoes, yams and vegetables.
- **Set the scene.** Light fires and candles, put out beverages, prepare coffee and get ready to welcome your guests.
- **Enjoy the meal.** When everything is on the table, give thanks and celebrate.

10 Tips for a Calm, Heartfelt Thanksgiving



Photo of Nantucket from [Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism](#)

Day After Thanksgiving

- **Ready, set, shop.** If you like sales and don't mind crowds, get up early and head to the stores for Black Friday shopping. Or do your [shopping online](#).
- **Recover.** Clean up after your Thanksgiving celebration and prepare your home for the rest of the holiday season.

Your Post-Thanksgiving Game Plan



Weekend After Thanksgiving

- **Look at your holiday decor.** Unpack your holiday decorations — tree lights, ornaments, wreaths, garlands, Advent calendar, crèche, stockings, door decor, exterior lights, yard scenes — and see what needs to be replaced and where you have gaps to fill. If you like to get your decorations up early, you can start putting them up now or hire a contractor, lighting specialist or other home pro to do it for you. Buy replacements or schedule time to make decorations.

10 Tips for Fuss-Free Holiday Decorating

[Shop for holiday decor on Houzz](#)



- **Make the connection.** Start writing, addressing and mailing out your holiday cards and letters.



Monday After Thanksgiving Weekend

- **Buy gifts online.** Plant yourself at the computer on Cyber Monday to take advantage of online holiday shopping deals.

[Find holiday gifts on Houzz](#)



Early December

- **Get in the spirit.** Put up your exterior decorations, yard lights and decor.
- **Freshen up.** Replant your container pots with seasonal plants.

10 Ideas for Stunning Holiday Lights



- **Put up your tree.** Buy and trim your Christmas tree.
- **Decorate the rest.** Put up other holiday decorations and lights in your living areas.
- **Tune up.** Create holiday music playlists to enjoy throughout the month.

Quick and Easy Christmas Decor With Greens, Wreaths and Pine Cones



- **Fill the pantry.** Restock your cupboards and liquor cabinet for holiday parties. Order your holiday ham or turkey.

- **Look ahead to Hanukkah.** If you celebrate the Jewish Festival of Lights, plan and put together your menus, table, music, decor and activities, confirm guests and shop for gifts.

9 Fresh and Fun Hanukkah Decorating Ideas



Mid- to Late December

- **Socialize.** Set up your bar cart, prepare a few appetizers and throw a holiday party. If you're not up for a large gathering, invite over a few good friends for an evening of conversation or board games.

Glam-Camp Style and a Cocoa Cocktail for Your Bar Cart

[Shop for bar carts](#)



- **Make a sweet scene.** Get kids into the holiday fun with a cookie-baking or gingerbread-house-making session. Or invite over neighbors or friends who like to bake.

Inviting Kids Into the Kitchen: Suggestions for Nurturing Cooks



- **Observe Hanukkah.** Prepare for and enjoy the eight days of Hanukkah with your family and guests.

How 3 Families Celebrate Hanukkah at Home



Week Before Christmas

Post it. Mail and ship your last Christmas cards and gifts to arrive by Christmas. Send out any digital greetings.

[Surviving the Christmas Countdown: A Parent's Guide](#)

[Browse Houzz holiday gift guides](#)



- **Prepare for guests.** Clean up the house in anticipation of Christmas celebrations. If you will be hosting overnight guests and you didn't already do it in November, get guest rooms in order and check your bed linens, towels and other necessities to make sure you have enough and everything is in good shape. Clear out space in closets or drawers for guests to store their things.

Genius Home Prep: A Guest Room in a Box



- **Plan the meal.** Finalize your Christmas menu and make a shopping list.
- **Stock up.** Check your pantry and shop for nonperishables. Closer to Christmas, buy perishables and floral decor.
- **Defrost.** Start defrosting a frozen turkey, allowing 24 hours for every 4 or 5 pounds.

The Not Naturally Organized Parent's Guide to the Holidays



- **Bake.** Do your holiday baking. If you can swing it, prepare your pie crusts ahead of time and freeze them.
- **Prep the table.** Iron your tablecloth and napkins. Ready your candles and centerpiece.

10 Ways to Get Your Kitchen Ready for the Holidays



Day Before Christmas Eve

- **Shop.** Buy your perishables. Pick up your turkey or ham if you ordered a fresh or cooked one.
- **Make the food.** Prep and cook everything that can be made in advance.

How to Stay Sane When Hosting Christmas



The Happy Home Blog

- **It's a wrap.** Finish wrapping your presents and put everything under the tree.

Last-Minute Holiday: Quick Ways to Personalize Your Decor and Gifts



Studio Dearborn

- **Capture the moment.** Charge the batteries in your camera, video recorder and smartphone. Put someone in charge of taking pictures and video.



Christmas Eve

- **Hit the stores.** Do any last-minute shopping for food, drinks or presents.
- **Prep, cook and bake.** Prep as much food today as possible. If you're hosting Christmas Eve dinner, start cooking early in the day.



- **Finishing touches.** Set your Christmas Eve or Christmas table.

10 Thoughtful and Thrifty Christmas Table Touches



Christmas Day

- **Recycle and reuse.** Have bags ready to gather up discarded gift wrapping paper and ribbons.
- **Cook.** Cook or roast your meat, poultry or fish, make salads and whipped cream, and cook potatoes and vegetables.

The Christmas Trees of Houzz



- **Celebrate.** Enjoy your Christmas gatherings and religious services with family and friends.



Week After Christmas

- **Get moving.** After the festivities are over and guests are gone, give your kitchen and living spaces a good tidying up. Help children assemble presents, install batteries and find places to put new items. Return presents early in the day to beat the crowds. Write thank-you notes. Send any last holiday cards, or start now if you haven't sent them yet.
- **Relax and reflect.** Take time to think about the year that was and the year ahead. Spend quality time with loved ones.
- **Give a little more.** Make charitable contributions before the end of the year.

8 Home Projects Perfect for Holiday Downtime



- **Celebrate Kwanzaa.** Decorate, light candles and involve family members in activities highlighting the seven principles of Kwanzaa for seven days starting the day after Christmas. On the sixth day (New Year's Eve) host a feast, and on the seventh exchange gifts.

Celebrating Kwanzaa: Honor African Heritage All Over the Home



New Year's Eve and New Year's Day

- **Keep the party going.** Are you hosting guests for New Year's Eve or New Year's Day? Plan your menus, restock your pantry and bar cart, refresh your decor and buy or make party favors.

Simple Pleasures: Welcoming the New Year



- **Raise a glass.** Get your new year off to a great start with people you enjoy. Toast the good times and make plans for new adventures.

