

HOLIDAYS

Vocabulary

calendar – a table showing days, weeks, and months of a year

holiday – a time of rest from work or school

holiday season – the time from late November through January when several holidays (such as Christmas, Hanukkah, and New Year's Eve) happen

vacation – a holiday or time spent not working

day off – a day's holiday from work or school, on what would normally be a working day

birthday – a day that is an exact number of years after the day you were born

Halloween – the night of October 31st, which is now celebrated by children who dress in costumes and go from house to house asking for sweets, especially in the US and Canada

jack-o'-lantern – a pumpkin that has a face cut into it and a candle put inside to shine through the holes

haunted house – a Halloween amusement attraction in which a house is decorated to frighten the people who pass through the attraction

Thanksgiving – a public holiday in the US and Canada when families have a large meal together to celebrate and be thankful for food, health, families

Thanksgiving meal – a large meal cooked for Thanksgiving, usually a large roasted turkey

stuffing – a mixture of bread, onions and herbs used to stuff or fill turkey, chicken, or other meat before cooking

Black Friday – the day after Thanksgiving in the US, when stores open early and prices are reduced

Christmas – the period of time around December 25th, the day when Christians celebrate the birth of Christ

candy cane – a stick of hard red and white sugar with a curved end

candle – a stick of wax with a string through the middle, which you burn to give light

poinsettia – a tropical plant with groups of large red or white leaves that look like flowers (it is also known as Christmas Flower)

bauble – a brightly colored decoration that looks like a ball and is used to decorate a Christmas tree

Christmas stocking – a long sock or similar receptacle hung up by children on Christmas Eve for Father Christmas to fill with presents

Boxing Day – the day after Christmas Day, which is a public holiday in the UK and some other countries

holly – a small tree with sharp dark green leaves and red berries OR the leaves and berries of this tree, used as a decoration at Christmas

costume – a set of clothes worn by people to make them look like something such as an animal, famous person, etc.

Hanukkah – an eight-day Jewish holiday in November or December

menorah – a Jewish candlestick that holds seven or nine candles

eve – the night or day before a holiday or an important day

ball drop – refers to the New Year's Eve celebration in New York's Times Square that features a large ball sliding down a pole until it reaches the ground at midnight

New Year's Day – a national holiday celebrated on January 1st, the first day of the New Year

New Year's resolution – a firm decision made on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day to do or refrain from doing something over the course of the coming year

Valentine's Day – celebrated on February 14th, a day when you give a valentine card to someone you have, or would like to have, a romantic relationship with

St. Patrick's Day – a cultural and religious celebration held on March 17th, the traditional death date of Saint Patrick, when people wear green color

Easter – a Christian holy day in March or April when Christians remember the death of Christ and his return to life

hot-cross bun – a round sweet bread roll with a mark in the shape of a cross on top, that is traditionally eaten just before Easter

Easter egg – a chocolate egg bought or given as a present at Easter

Easter bunny – an imaginary rabbit that children believe brings chocolate eggs at Easter

Easter hunt – a game during which decorated eggs or Easter eggs are hidden for children to find

April Fool's Day – April 1st, a day when people play tricks on each other

Mother's Day – the second Sunday in May appointed for the honoring of mothers

Father's Day – the third Sunday in June appointed for the honoring of fathers

Labor Day – a public holiday or day of festivities held in honour of working people, in many countries on May 1st, in the US and Canada on the first Monday in September

Memorial Day – a national holiday in the US on the last Monday in May to remember soldiers who have died in wars

Fourth of July – a national holiday in the US that celebrates the beginning of the United States as a nation

bank holiday – an official holiday when banks and most businesses are closed

shopping craze – usually happen around Christmas when everyone goes crazy about buying presents

shopping – the activity of going to shops and buying things

window-shopping – the activity of looking at goods in shop windows without intending to buy them

gift/present – something that you give someone, for example to thank them or because you like them, especially on a special occasion

balloon – an object made of brightly coloured thin rubber that is filled with air and used as a toy or decoration for parties

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- greeting card** – a decorative card sent with good wishes
- gift tag** – a tag attached to a gift that says who it is from
- party** – an event when a lot of people meet together to enjoy themselves by eating, drinking, dancing
- crowd** – a large group of people
- annual** – yearly
- family reunion** – an occasion when members of an extended family gather together
- line** – a row of people waiting one behind another
- sane** – able to think in a normal and reasonable way
- Hoppin' John** – a popular Southern American dish of black-eyed peas, pork, and rice, eaten on New Year's Day to bring good luck
- superstition** – belief that is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge but is connected with old ideas about magic
- ATM** (automated teller machine) – a machine outside a bank that you use to get money from your account
- student dormitory** – a large building at a college or university where students live

Verbs

- to celebrate** – to take part in special enjoyable activities in order to show that a particular event or holiday is important
- to countdown** – to count backwards (from a higher number to a lower one) to the start of a specific event
- to wind down** – to gradually relax after doing something that has made you tired or worried
- to kick back** – to stop doing things and relax
- to chill out** – to relax completely or not allow things to upset you
- to order** – to ask for food or a drink in a restaurant, bar, etc.
- to handle** – to manage, to solve a situation or a problem

Phrases

- to exchange gifts/presents** – when someone gives you a present and in return, you are giving him one too
- to make a shopping list** – to make a list of things you want to buy so you will not forget them
- to keep someone a company** – to spend time with someone so the person is not alone
- to have a look at something** – to look at something in a quick manner
- to take some time off** – to take a vacation from work for some period of time
- to withdraw money** – to take money out of a bank account

I am going to be a nervous wreck – I am going to stress and feel emotionally exhausted a lot

mouths to feed – people, especially children who need to be fed

the prices are reduced – the prices that have been intentionally made lower

to do something on a shoestring OR **to do something on the cheap** – to do something without spending a lot of money

so far – up to this time

to make headway – to make progress

to turn over a new leaf – to begin to behave in a more responsible manner

to live it up OR **to live the life** – when someone is really enjoying themselves and they are having a really good time without worrying about anything, including money

popping the champagne – opening the champagne with a peculiar “pop” sound

at the crack of dawn – the earliest time in the day, just as the sun is rising

What’s up? – an informal way of asking someone what is new or what is happening

take it easy – to relax and not do very much

to call it a day/night – to stop doing an activity for the rest of the day or to finish what you’re doing at night and go home to bed

I am out of money – I do not have money

Grammar Corner

We use *would rather* (or *’d rather*) to state our likes and dislikes, i.e. preferring one thing to another.

If we talk about ourselves, we should use *would rather* + the base form of the verb.

e.g. I’d rather stay at home tonight. I don’t feel like going out.

Jane would rather have 100 job interviews than go Christmas shopping.

If we want to express our opinion on what someone else should do, we use *would rather* + the clause in the *past simple* tense.

e.g. I’d rather you helped me out with cooking.

They’d rather me didn’t spend a fortune on gifts.

Real Life Situations

(P1 – Person 1, P2 – Person 2)

Holiday Season in the US

P1: Hey, mom! What are you doing?

P2: I am cooking a Thanksgiving meal.

P1: Oh, I have forgotten that the holiday season is almost here. Will we have a big party?

P2: A party? Well, I don't know if it can be called a party, just an annual family reunion.

P1: Will the whole family come for Thanksgiving?

P2: Yeah, and they'll stay here till the holiday season ends.

P1: Sounds like it's going to be a lot of fun.

P2: Sounds like I am going to be a nervous wreck for all the holiday period.

P1: It must be very stressful to have so many mouths to feed. Have you already done all the shopping?

P2: I think, yes? I have bought the biggest turkey that was there in the shop and all the necessary ingredients for stuffing.

P1: No, I actually meant the presents. It's going to be a family reunion for all the holiday season, isn't it? And then comes the gift exchange.

P2: Oh, the presents! Well, there's Black Friday for that, everything is going to be on sale. I always buy all these Christmas candy canes, baubles, hollies, and even a poinsettia on Black Friday. Will you join me for this gift hunt?

P1: To be honest, I'd rather stay home and watch TV. I'm not a big fan of this shopping craze that begins on Black Friday and ends only after Boxing Day. Crowds of people staying in a two-mile line to buy Christmas stockings on sale, does it sound sane?

P2: Well, people had been waiting for this day for a year to buy everything on sale. Usually, the prices are really reduced so much that a one-year wait and a two-mile line is worth it. Why not to do shopping on a shoestring if you have this opportunity?

P1: That's cool that you're enjoying wandering along the overcrowded malls and department stores, but I know you – and going shopping with you means spending a crazy amount of hours window-shopping before you make a decision to buy one tiny gift.

P2: No, it won't be like that this time, I promise. I've already written down a shopping list.

P1: Okay, I'll keep you a company, but only if you promise that this year we won't choose gift tags and greeting cards for our second cousins for an hour and a half!

P2: Haha, I will try.

New Year's Eve

P1: Hello, William! How is the preparation for New Year's Day going?

P2: Hi, Nancy! It's going great so far. I've just finished signing greeting cards for my friends and family. Are you staying in New York for New Year's Day?

P1: No, this year I'm flying to the UK to celebrate New Year's with my family. I haven't seen them in a long while, so it'll be a sweet family reunion.

P2: The UK, that's so cool! Do people watch the ball drop there as well?

P1: The ball drop? No, not really. The British tradition of celebrating New Year's Eve differs from the American one.

P2: Oh, don't people eat Hoppin' John there as well?

P1: No way haha. Last year I stayed in the US for New Year's and tried this dish. I hate peas, so I didn't like it at all. I don't understand how people can eat it.

P2: Actually, I really love this dish. The black-eyed peas symbolize coins. So according to a legend, eating this dish will bring prosperity and a year of good luck.

P1: Do you really believe in superstitions? Don't tell me that you also write a New Year's resolution list.

P2: Hmm, well, I do. This is my tradition: every New Year's Eve I have a look at my last year's New Year's resolution list and create a new one. This is a nice way of visualizing your goals, and I believe that I achieve them faster when I write them down. It helps me make headway in the future.

P1: Yeah, I heard that some people find it easier to turn over a new leaf when writing New Year's resolutions. What will be your "number one" New Year's resolution for the next year?

P2: Definitely stressing less and chilling out more. I want to wind down and kick back. My "number two" New Year's resolution is to celebrate the following New Year in a new country. Just imagine: to countdown in a foreign language and not looking at the Time Square...

P1: Haha, not looking at Big Ben in my case. You know, I find it interesting how holiday traditions and customs differ around the globe. For example, in the UK we've got a funny superstition called "first footing". The first person who enters someone's house in the New Year will bring all the luck for those coming with them. One more fun fact is that some people believe that dark-haired people are the luckiest first footers.

P2: Wow, amazing! I think you can't call it a superstition, it's a tradition. Although there are different customs and traditions, there's something that we have in common.

P1: What's that?

P2: Popping the champagne while counting down till the New Year begins.

P1: Haha, that's right! And wandering along the streets at the crack of dawn.

P2: That's a nice holiday, no matter how you celebrate it.

P1: Agree. I am looking forward to celebrating it.

Holiday Season in the US

P1: Hey, what's up?

P2: I'm confused.

P1: Why? What happened?

P2: I needed to go to the bank today as my parents sent me money for Christmas. And you know what? It was closed! I decided to go to another one, and then 3 more... And all of them were closed!

P1: Oh... Don't you know that Christmas is a bank holiday?

P2: A bank holiday? What?

P1: Here, in the UK, we've got bank holidays – they're public holidays when banks and most businesses are closed. Christmas is one of them.

P2: That's so strange. We don't have that in my country.

P1: Yeah, it seems like it's an English thing. There are about eight bank holidays in England.

P2: What are they?

P1: These are a New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, the early May bank holiday, the Spring bank holiday, the Summer bank holiday, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day.

P2: What should I do if I can't withdraw money from the ATM as it's an international money transfer. I need to go to the bank. I have some money left, but I can't even buy presents for my friends or something tasty to serve the dinner table.

P1: You live in a student dormitory, what kind of dinner table are you going to serve? Order some fast food and call it a night!

P2: But I'm out of money!

P1: I can lend you some till the bank holiday is over.