

Christmas in Britain

by Jane Lawson at DailyStep.com

When you think about Christmas in Britain, do any images come to mind? I always love hearing from my students how Christmas is celebrated in their home countries, so I want to tell you a bit about how we do it here.



Christmas is the main national holiday in the UK, because there are two public holidays in a row. The thing I like best about Christmas is the way that it brings people together. Of course, Christmas is a Christian festival, but it is also a time when people of all religions can make the most of the holidays and the festive spirit. At this time of year, there are office parties, friends getting together for a meal or a drink and families spending time together. The streets are alive with people doing their Christmas shopping, buying presents for family and friends (I seem to have left my own Christmas shopping very late as usual!), and most main streets in London and throughout the country have Christmas lights hanging from the lamp posts, which add to the festive atmosphere. You can see some of London's Christmas lights in the top left hand picture.

The main day of celebration in Britain is 25th December – unlike in many Christian countries, where the main celebration is on 24th December. The 25th December is called Christmas Day, the 24th December is called Christmas Eve (i.e. the evening before Christmas) and the 26th December is called Boxing Day, which used to be the traditional day for giving Christmas presents. On 25th December, Christmas church services are usually held in the morning, after which families or friends traditionally cook a feast of roasted meat, often turkey or goose, cooked with stuffing and bacon, roast potatoes and parsnips, carrots and Brussels sprouts. This is followed by Christmas pudding, a boiled or steamed pudding made from fruit and spices, with brandy butter and small sweet mince pies. You can see pictures of both the main Christmas meal and the Christmas pudding on this page. During the dinner, we pull Christmas crackers, which make a popping sound when we pull them and contain jokes and small gifts, and also colourful paper crowns, which we wear until the end of the meal. You can see a cracker being pulled in the bottom right hand picture. After dinner, we sometimes play games or watch films, or just sit around chatting with the family. The giving of Christmas presents is an important ritual, and these are usually exchanged either just before or just after Christmas dinner.

Of course, I am just describing a typical family Christmas here, but not everyone spends it in the same way. You can hear 2 people talking about how they spend Christmas in next week's level 3 subscriber audio lessons.

Now let's move on to our [Audio Word Study](#), where we will finish looking at the various meanings of a confusing little word - JUST.

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