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A few years ago, I made a New Year’s resolution that really changed my life. It wasn’t to lose weight or read more or become a more patient parent (all recurring themes in my resolutions, year after year). It wasn’t even really all that tangible—it was sort of vague, really—and I didn’t know how to go about achieving it. But I knew, in my heart, that it was important to me. It was the very simple idea that I would give more.

People think about giving during the holiday season. Charitable donations increase, more people volunteer and we look for ways to share what we have. We make sure our kids bring canned goods to school, maybe we help them choose a toy for a local toy drive, or perhaps we make a family donation to a charity. (For more ideas on making altruism a family affair, see page 15.) These are all lovely things to do, and to share with our kids. But I kept thinking, what happens in January?

So I decided that for one whole year, I would go out of my way to be kind. It wasn’t about money (hello, daycare payments) or even time (time? What even is that?). It was about making the lives of people in my community easier, and not just in December. It was about saying yes to sometimes inconvenient requests, because I knew I could shuffle my priorities a bit to pitch in. It was about showing my kids that sometimes you do things you don’t love to make the world a bit better. I tell my girls, “Sometimes you have to plant trees without expecting to sit in their shade.” At 7 and 4, they’re too little to understand right now, but I hope that if I say it often enough, it will stick.

In the course of that year, an amazing thing happened: I made new friends. I made a few lives easier. I figured out that I have lots of love to give, even when I think I’m totally at my max capacity. It was an amazing resolution, and it worked. It made me feel like I was really contributing, and it showed my kids that you never lose when you put others first.

It has now become my resolution every January 1. How can I give back this year? What can I do? Because kindness never goes unanswered, friends. I can promise you that.

Happiest holidays from my family to yours —

Katie

KATIE DUPUIS
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MY FAVE
LAST-MINUTE
GIFTS

It’s always helpful to have a few week-of (or even night-before) gift ideas up your sleeve, for both kids and adults.

I love providing a new experience in place of a material gift. My go-to? Museum or playspace passes ordered with just a few clicks online. Movie passes (with snacks included, of course) are also fun for bigger kids who will sit through a flick!

For adults, consider gifting a subscription to an online service the gift recipient would enjoy. I love Ancestry.ca for genealogy buffs (AncestryDNA is an option this year, too, with shipping up until December 19!) and Netflix or PrimeTV for TV and movie junkies.

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RESOLUTION

A repeat

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CONTENTS

FAMILY ROOM
10 #PUTDOWNTHEPHONE AND... DIY an Advent calendar.
11 CHECK THIS OUT Books galore + festive teacher gifts.
15 SECRETS TO... Make charity a family affair.
17 BIRTHDAYS 101 Outdoor winter party ideas.
18 INSIDER’S GUIDE A family field trip to Quebec.
21 REAL TALK How much should we tell our kids about our finances?
23 TOUCHY SUBJECT Are you into sleepovers?

MIND + BODY
26 #WETRIEDIT Mittens we love.
27 CHECK THIS OUT One-minute mindfulness, family luggage, beauty aisle and more.
31 YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT... Diaper rash.
32 EXPERT ADVICE How to start the conversation about puberty.
33 FEATURE How to stick to routines during the holiday season.

FEATURES
37 Are we going overboard to make childhood magical?
42 Toy guide 2018
52 Gift guide 2018

KITCHEN TABLE
58 #YUCKTOYUM Chocolate-dipped fruit.
59 KIDS IN THE KITCHEN One cookie dough, three ways.
59 CHECK THIS OUT Expert advice, cookbooks, gear to get.
62 SUPPER IS SOLVED Slowcooker chicken chili.
64 EXCERPT A holiday feast from Uncomplicated.

GROWING UP
70 PREGNANCY Is a birthing centre right for you?
71 BABY Sleep safety.
72 TODDLER How to avoid using negative words.
73 LITTLE KID Help your kid handle stage fright.
74 BIG KID Tips for teaching kids to handle stress.

TORONTO+
76 #PARENTPROFILE Blogger Alyssa Garrison.
77 CHECK THIS OUT The freebie and retail therapy.
79 NEIGHBOURHOOD Yonge and Eglinton.
80 LISTINGS Holiday events + winter activities in and around the city.

IN EVERY ISSUE
2 Editor’s note
5 Masthead
7 WIN! A chance to win a year of free daycare (value $17,000) and other great prizes.
39 Become at ParentsCanada product tester (click here to join!).
85 PRINTABLE Download and print a monthly calendar for 2019.
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This month’s cover models are Jaclyn Huber and her daughter Sophia Rose (we love this sweet moment captured between them, over hot chocolate). Jaclyn’s Instagram feed (@jaclynhuber) is all kinds of pretty, as she shares about her life with husband Corey, daughters Kenzie, Sophia and new baby Josie Jane, who just arrived on October 25.
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AIR CANADA VACATIONS

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YEAH, WE’RE GOING TO SAY IT:

It’s time to put down that smartphone and spend some quality time with your kiddos. (Don’t get us wrong—we know how addictive that phone can be, and there should definitely be time each day for scrolling through your Instagram feed.) We’ll give you something to do with your crew in this space in each issue.
This cute take on the classic countdown is made with simple supplies—small paper or fabric bags, branches or dowel, and some pretty string or twine. The best part? You get to choose special gifts and treats to tailor the experience for your littles.

1. Trim branches or dowel to your desired length (for the full 3 1/2 week-calendar, you’ll need three lengths of wood). If you’re buying the dowel at a hardware store, they will usually cut it for you for free.

2. Cut two to three feet of twine and tie each end to the side of the first branch or dowel. Cut two more pieces of twine, about a foot each, to tie the second branch or dowel to the first. If adding a third row, repeat with two more pieces of twine and the remaining branch or dowel.

3. Decorate each bag, and poke two holes in the top for closure. Cut a 10-inch piece of twine for each bag, and knot through one hole.

4. Fill bags with treats, small toys and mini books. Then, tie each bag on to the dowels by knotting through the second hole, in whichever order you prefer. To reuse next year, replace the twine on each bag.

You don’t need to start the calendar on December 1, if 25 days feels too long. A 10-day or 14-day countdown is just as exciting, and less work for mom and dad.
In addition to the highly anticipated *Nutcracker and the Four Realms* (out November 2) and the animated *Grinch* revamp (out November 9), we are counting down to the December 19 release of *Mary Poppins Returns*. This sequel—in the age of classic reboots, this is a second chapter and not a remake—takes place 25 years after the original film, and marks the arrival of Jane and Michael Banks’s beloved, magical nanny, who has returned to Cherry Tree Lane to help the Banks family through a personal tragedy.

The movie has a star-studded cast including Emily Blunt as Poppins, Ben Whishaw as Michael, Emily Mortimer as Jane, Lin-Manuel Miranda as lamplighter Jack, Julie Walters as housekeeper Ellen, Colin Firth as president of the bank, Meryl Streep as cousin Topsy and Angela Lansbury as The Balloon Lady. Ninety-two-year-old Dick van Dyke, who played chimney sweep Bert in the first *Mary Poppins*, even has a cameo.
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11. DAVIDSTEA 24 TEAS TO LOVE, $32, DAVIDSTEA.COM.
12. POST-OPERATION BLANKET WARMER DONATION FOR SICKKIDS, $75, GETBETTERGIFTS.SICKKIDSFOUNDATION.COM.
13. READING SOCKS IN MERLOT, $35, INDIGO.CA.
14. NATURAL WINTER FAVES FOAMING HAND SOAP, $23 FOR 5, BATHANDBODYWORKS.COM.
15. MEN’S BEANIE $12, AND MEN’S HERRINGBONE SKI GLOVES, $19, JOEFRESH.COM.
16. PEPPERMINT BARK, $17, PURDYS.COM.
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18. KNIT COFFEE CUP SLEEVE, $12, PETITCHATONBOUTIQUE FROM ETSY.CA.
WE HAVE OUR SHARE of holiday traditions at our place, and yes, many are pretty similar to what’s going on in other households across the country: we light the menorah; decorate the Christmas tree; spend too much on presents; eat lots of fried appetizers at parties; the list goes on. But there’s one custom I look forward to every December (besides a wine-and-board-games-filled Christmas Eve with my favourite people)—that doubles as the perfect “why giving is important” teaching moment. Our girls (Addyson, 10, and Peyton, 8) hit the toy store, lovingly choose and buy presents (with their own debit cards), then we visit a special place to our family, Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children, and deliver the haul.

“Inspiring children to give back to the community is an important step in their development—it helps build compassion and empathy, and encourages kindness from an early age,” says Karen Young, the president and chief executive officer of United Way of Calgary and Area.

“Once we encourage our children to help other people, it starts to become a way of life for them, and they begin to experience fulfillment and a boost in their self-esteem when they realize they can make a difference.” While it’s not the only time of year we give back, our family trip to SickKids has affected all four of us. That’s one reason (of so many) to make charity a family affair. Not only does it remind Mom and Dad to practice empathy and feel thankful, it also allows us to do something truly good with and for our kiddos. “By fostering kids’ charitable impulses well into their adolescence and young adulthood, parents have a unique opportunity to shape the next generation of community leaders,” says Young. Read on for five ways to give back as a family now and throughout the year.

—LISA VAN DE GEYN

1. VOLUNTEER. “This is a great way to grow together and have a positive impact,” Young says, adding volunteering is “more than handing over a donation and walking away—it’s about the journey that gift will take (whether time, talent or treasure) and the impact it will make on the community. If the kids are into animals, call your local shelter and see what they need. If they’re budding artists, do some painting together and take your creations to brighten up a nursing home.”

2. ADOPT A FAMILY. Try this one for the holidays. The Adopt-a-Family program (look online for one in your area) matches families in need (usually referred by social services) with families who want to make a difference. Kids’ wish lists are often full of toys and games, of course, but parents often ask for necessities—winter wear, toiletries, linens, grocery cards, diapers, etc.

3. Create a charity budget. Next time you’re all sitting around the dinner table, says Young, “talk about what needs each family member sees in their lives and what the best ways of solving that need might be.” Talk about allocating some of everyone’s budget—including allowances—to solving the issues the family is passionate about.

4. Do good deeds. Make a list of simple ways to help in your community—clean up garbage on your family walk, shovel driveways on your street, make a meal for a neighbour who could use a hand. Remind your kids that making a difference isn’t about making a huge gesture or spending a lot of money.

5. FUNDRAISE. United Way’s yearly cross-Canada Plane Pull events are great fundraisers. “We organize a Kids’ Pull event where kids fundraise to pull an 11,000-pound airplane across tarmac,” Young says. “This is often where many children make their first charitable donation of $10. It’s a fantastic way of motivating them to think about giving from a young age.”
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I have both a warm-weather baby and a cold-weather baby. My oldest, Sophie, arrived on a freezing day in mid-November. I remember because my feet were so swollen I had to wear flipflops home the next morning, and my poor toes were icicles. But my second daughter, Juliette, made her appearance on a glorious, warm afternoon in August. I opened the windows in my hospital room and let the perfect, summertime breeze in.

At the time, I didn't really consider the difference between my winter (okay, fine, late fall) and summer babies—the newborn days are challenging no matter the temperature—but when Juliette turned one and we held her birthday party, I remember thinking, "holy crap, this is so much easier!" We did a simple backyard barbecue complete with baby-covered-in-cake pictures where the mess stayed outside. The kids played water games and ate popsicles. Our friends stayed until late in the evening, just sitting under the stars, laughing and talking. It was a complete 180 from Sophie's birthday parties where everyone had to cram into our house, and every room looked like the Tazmanian Devil was in attendance after all was said and done.

As I was cleaning up from Sophie's party last November, I got to thinking: What if we did Soph's birthday outside next year? Sure, it's cold, but cold doesn't have to mean miserable, right? With that in mind, here are five ways to take the festivities outdoors. (I'll let you know if it works!)

—KATIE DUPUIS

1. GET PARTY GUESTS MOVING.
   Red Rover, Capture the Flag or full-body Rock, Paper, Scissors are amazing ways to get everyone on their feet. Split party guests into teams, explain the rules and let them loose. If your guests are under the age of five, or if your outdoor area isn't enclosed, pair young ones up with older kids or adults. If the birthday you're celebrating is deep into the winter months, consider skating or tobogganing as a party activity.

2. MAKE THE WEATHER WORK IN YOUR FAVOUR.
   Snow on the ground? No problem. Hello, snowman-building competition. Or, grab some snow paint and draw out a dodgeball court or hopscotch game. If you're too early for snow, use found objects to create an obstacle course or scavenger hunt.

3. PLAN WAYS TO WARM UP.
   In many municipalities, you can rent a firepit in a park. Start a bonfire early, so it's really going by the time your guests arrive, and have hot chocolate and coffee or cider ready to roll. Plan food that works over an open flame, too—think hot dogs, grilled cheese, fruit skewers and marshmallows (s'mores in winter? Where do we sign up?).

4. GIVE COLD-WEATHER FAVOURS OUT AT THE BEGINNING.
   Instead of typical loot bags, think about how to help your guests have a good time outside. Hit up your local dollar store for extra hats and mitts for kid guests, and pick up insulated coffee cups for the grownups.

5. SKIP THE CAKE AND GET CREATIVE.
   No one wants to cut and serve cake in the cold. Go for cupcakes if your kiddo insists on cakey goodness (no serving knife or forks required) or if you have snow, try your hand at maple sugar candy.
When I close my eyes, my dream vacay looks like this: finally reading the book I’ve been meaning to get to for a year; a glass of sangria in my hand; my feet up and butt firmly planted on a lounge chair under swaying palms; watching the turquoise waters, listening to the waves. But that’s me—I prefer spending my very limited time away doing the bare minimum. Of course, not all Canadians are on the same page when it comes to vacation plans. A recent study from travel ecommerce company Booking.com found that about half of the Canadians they surveyed believe travelling has taught them life skills. They also predicted that next year will see even more travellers hoping to learn something new while away from home. This idea wasn’t lost on me when my husband, Peter, and I decided to take our girls away for a weekend last August. Peyton, 8, has been into animals since she could talk—she’s a huge fan of polar bears, pandas, dolphins and whales, especially, and aspires to be a zoologist or marine biologist when she grows up. With that in mind, and after a quick online search, I landed on Tadoussac—a village in Quebec where the St. Lawrence and Saguenay rivers meet. Apparently it’s one of the best places in the country for whale-watching. We could definitely do the 10-hour drive for the kids to see some of the biggest animals on the planet, and I’d feel good about them learning a thing or two.

“Giving kids the chance to explore their interests in a fun, meaningful way can give them...
the upper hand in improving education, future career skills and emotional maturity—things parents are always striving to give their kids,” says Angela Cavis, Booking.com’s senior manager of communications and public relations for North America. “Vacations to amusement parks and popular beach destinations are great for families with small kids or infants, but as soon as children get older and find their ‘niche,’ or have something they’ve become obsessed with, it makes perfect sense to start accommodating their budding interests and aspirations into travel plans.”

The girls were pumped about the opportunity to see whales in real life. After a night at Hotel Le Béluga, a quaint spot in the village, we boarded one of the large observation boats that cruises the St. Lawrence and settled in for a three-hour tour. Our guide offered interesting facts about the area, the river and its marine life—including the 13 whale species found in the St. Lawrence, how to identify what we see (humpbacks have a black back and long white pectoral fins) and what to look for (a plume of mist above the water may be a sign of a whale exhaling and surfacing). It wasn’t long before we caught our first glimpse of a humpback, and we spent the remainder of the cruise learning and watching whales surface and dive.

While researching on Booking.com, I had also discovered Tadoussac was home to a wild black-bear watching excursion, so I added that to our itinerary. (I couldn’t give Peyton polar bears, but hey, black bears would be equally exciting, right?) After a morning immersed in all-things whales, we arrived at Observation de l’Ours Noir a couple of hours before sunset. Before venturing into the small observation platform in the forest, our guide talked about the life of the area’s black bears—their food sources, hibernation and the refuge set up 12 years ago to help orphaned cubs adapt to their natural habitat. There was absolutely no talking allowed during the two-hour observation (tip: make sure your kids are up for this before you book—our kids were glued to the action and were silent) so we asked our questions at the end. Seeing seven bears, including two cubs, doing their thing in the forest where they live was quite the experience. Both Peyton and Addyson, 10, observed their behaviour, named them and noted interesting things about them.

On the long drive home there was plenty of talk about what we’d seen. The trip was such a hit that the girls decided Tadoussac would be what they’d share when asked to talk about their favourite summer memory on the first day of school. The education didn’t stop there. When we got home, we dug into their animal books to read more about the whales and bears we saw. Peyton took it upon herself to research (voluntary homework!) on her iPad, and proceeded to write a full page about humpbacks and belugas—she’s never done this (not even when we got back from our first family vacation to see the Mouse a few years ago). Really it was a win-win for all of us. I didn’t get to lounge, smell the ocean air or start that memoir I’ve been waiting to read, but we all experienced something new, learned a lot and really had a ball. And yes, Peyton still wants to be a zoologist.
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I would bet everything I wish had in my bank account that my kids think my husband, Peter, and I are rich. At 10 and 8, my girls know money doesn’t grow on trees—they see how hard the adults in their lives work and know things (most things) are “expensive.” (They know this because they hear us say the word so much.) Still, Peyton truly thinks that every time we leave the house we’ll buy her something. And Addyson really has no idea how much, say, $100 is worth or how long it takes to make that amount of money.

As their parents we blame ourselves. We all know it’s wise to start talking to kids about finances from a young age, and it’s no secret that financial literacy is crucial. (In fact, I wish Peter and I had learned more about it when we were kids, teenagers, in our twenties and in the first 11 years of our marriage.) But when it comes to our own bank account, do our school-aged kids need to know we’re mortgaged up to our eyeballs and never, ever in the black?

“I made so many dumb financial choices when I was a teen and young adult because I simply didn’t know any better. Who actually pays off credit card balances in full, right? Personally, I have a lot of respect for kids and their ability to process information. They almost always understand way more than we give them credit for,” says Kira Vermond, a journalist and the author of The Secret Life of Money: A Kid’s Guide to Cash. “So I don’t think it’s an issue to use your own family’s financial situation as a learning tool for your kids. Hey, it’s not like they don’t know the jig is up if their parents always seem to be stressed out about money.”

That said, says Vermond, it’s important to take kids’ ages into consideration. “No five-year-old cares that your home-equity line of credit is growing, or that you’ve invested in a tax-free savings account. Kids that age are trying to figure out the difference between dimes and quarters.” But once your brood hits double-digits, Vermond is all for getting them involved in the family’s cashflow. “I don’t think it’s weird to have them come sit down beside you as you pay bills online or pay off some debt. These are real-life examples that money borrowed must be paid back—even if you don’t feel like parting with the cash,” she says. “Watching your bank account dwindle after paying off a big credit card will leave an impression. In a good and realistic way.”

HOW MUCH SHOULD I TELL MY KIDS ABOUT MY FINANCES?

Deputy editor Lisa Van de Geyn asks a financial writer and fellow parents for their take on spilling the beans about what’s in their pocketbooks.
LOVE THIS PLACE

#MYSTYLEPLACE GET IT. WEAR IT. SHARE IT!

@CHILDRENSPLACE
This might seem like a silly question (so much fun, no?) but it’s actually a pretty contentious issue. When we asked our readers, we were surprised how divisive the response was. Read on for the pros and cons of slumber parties.

When my oldest child reached an age that she was asking to have a friend sleepover, I was initially reluctant. It felt like a lot of work, especially juggling four kids of my own, and I wondered how my parents managed to put up with so many slumber parties when my sister and I were growing up. But despite my misgivings, I said yes, because I wanted my kids to have experiences similar to the memories I cherished.

I’ve since figured out my parents’ secret: They didn’t see themselves as hosts, but instead as a safe place for our friends to spend time. My mom didn’t plan elaborate craft projects or whip herself into a frenzy creating themed meals. There was just an extra plate of whatever we were having for dinner, and instructions on how to find the cereal cupboard the next morning.

With this mellow approach in mind, we’ve become sleepover experts, and we welcome the fun. Inviting your kids’ friends to sleep over is a way to include them in the everyday hum of your family life. It’s those unstructured and slow moments that provide an opportunity to get to know them better. Many of our kids’ friends come from smaller families, and joining a movie night with a pile of siblings is a lot of fun. Our kids are happy to grab a sleeping bag and head to a friend’s house for the night, too. It’s a chance to practise some independence.

It’s true that a sleepover can end with a cranky, overtired kid and a messy family room. But it can also mean a late-night heart-to-hearts and shared moments that help your child feel more connected to a friend. It can also give you a front row seat to how your child navigates friendships.

Sleepovers don’t have be a cumber some chore and can actually be a great gift—an ordinary night with an extra plate and a bigger bowl of popcorn. —LOUISE GLEESON

A friend recently hosted her first sleepover and I warned her it would be one of the worst nights of her life. I told her about the shrieking, the injuries, the mess, the complaining, the farting, the fights, the poorly executed karaoke. The next day she reported back: The four girls had quietly read their books for half an hour and it was lights out by 10:50.

This has not been my experience of sleepovers.

Three years ago, our then-eight-year-old went happily off to his first major sleepover. We picked him up early the next morning, as we’d planned to go cross-country skiing that day, and the kid who slunk into the car was one I barely recognized. There had been 10 other boys. There had been, apparently, a scream-filled wrestling match at 3 a.m. They’d fallen asleep at 6 a.m. We’d arrived to get him at 8 a.m.

The day was a disaster, filled with crabby hot tears and desperate whining at every snowy turn. The gloomy, angry mood continued the next day, and the next. The kid was a mess for a week, which pretty much spelled the end of his sleepover career. The next year, the same friend’s party happened, with a twist—we picked him up at 10 p.m. that night and saved ourselves a week-long meltdown.

Now that he’s 11, he gets that his body needs a ton of sleep for his brain to function happily, which makes him okay with our stance. (Fortunately, his friends’ parents appear to feel similarly to us, so we don’t have to turn a ton of invitations down.) Plus he’s mildly mortified by having parents, as a rule, so asking other kids to stay over at our place isn’t appealing either.

But the annual infamous birthday sleepover is coming up. He quite politely asked if he can go this year. We said maybe. —CATHERINE DAY
Video game systems offer more than ever to a busy household—they can be a way for parents to connect with their kids, and even for couples to connect, by way of a gaming session or a family movie night.

In the age of technological bombardment, parents are sometimes resistant to the idea of bringing a game system into their homes—they worry about it being a distraction or another demand for time on their already time-strapped families. They envision their kids being too wrapped up in a game to participate in family life. But, parents, this is far from the truth, and systems like Xbox One can have a real, positive impact on your kiddos and your relationships with them (and with each other!). Read on to find out how.

**FIND COMMON GROUND**

We’ve all been there. You ask about your child’s day, only to get an obligatory “fine” or “good.” Newsflash: Many adults find it easier to engage in conversation while taking part in an activity, and children are no exception. Choose a multi-player, quest type of game to give you and your child a platform for bonding, as you work together to problem-solve, and take the opportunity to listen and connect. The game may provide enough of a buffer for a kiddo who has difficulty sharing to open up more easily.

**MAKE FAMILY MEMORIES**

Video games don’t have to be a single-player experience in a room away from others. Make it a family affair! Choose a general level, appropriate-for-all-ages game and set up a round-robin tournament. Similar to a family board game night, a video game night has the potential to bring your family together and create memories your kids will treasure. Keep it coming with a steady stream of snacks, and have a couple of different game options on hand to keep the fun going. For the ultimate game night, Xbox Game Pass ($11.99 a month) provides unlimited access to more than 100 Xbox One and Xbox 360 titles (including new Xbox exclusive titles, available on the day they launch!). And if your brood loves a game enough to want to own it forever, you can purchase it and save up to 20% on the store price.

**CONNECT AS A COUPLE**

Who says the kids should have all the fun? Playing video games together is the perfect way to unwind after a hectic day. Pour a glass of wine and challenge one another to a virtual faceoff. You can also connect to apps and entertainment services like Netflix, Spotify and the Microsoft Store to grab a newly released movie, a classic TV show or a game you’ll love. On Xbox, there’s something for everyone.
WE LOVE RECOS FROM OTHER PARENTS:
So that's why we're aiming to give you go-tos that work, for everything from first foods to first aid. This month we tried band aids, to figure out what bandages to have on hand for all kinds of ouchies. We threw in some fun ones, too, for the boo-boos you can't see but they totally can.
MITTENS
Finding the perfect mitten is a daunting task (never mind keeping track of both all winter). But we’ve got good news: We’ve done the legwork for you, rounding up a range of options from cozy, sherpa-lined picks to waterproof, all-weather choices. And, of course, they’re all adorable.

SHOP OUR FAVES

TWINKLEBELLE WATERPROOF STAY-ON MITTS, $20; AMAZON.COM

CALIKIDS ICELAND ACRYLIC KNIT & BERBER MITTENS, $16; WELL.CA

ICOCO ALL-COVER DOUBLE-THICK MITTENS, $12; WALMART.CA

KOMBI THE CAMP MITT, $26; WELL.CA

7AM MITTENS BORDEAUX, $22; 7AMENFANT.COM

MIMITENS ALPHABET BUDDIES MITTENS, $33; MIMITENS.COM
FAMILY FITNESS

It’s tempting to want to move your workouts indoors in the winter, but there are lots of ways to get exercise outside when the temperature drops. (And trust us, your kids will want to get in on these activities, too!)

SKATING
Ice skating is a great, low-impact way to get your heart pumping. It’s good for your joints, your core and your stress level. Take the kids out for a spin at your local rink, or go out for a higher-intensity, solo skate.

TOBOGGANING
Any parent who has dragged a sled up a snowy hill on repeat knows how much of a workout tobogganing can be. Look for a hill with a gradual side and a steep side: Let the kids slide down the sloped side and climb up the other to up the ante on your sweat session.

SNOWSHOEING
While this activity requires a bit of an investment (snow shoes start at about $40), snow shoeing is an awesome, low-impact workout the family can do together. There are many groomed trails in Canada just waiting for you, and some ski resorts also have snow shoeing as an option.

SHOP OUR FAVES

1. ERGOBABY WALK IN THE PARK DIAPER BAG IN TAUPE, $85, TOYSRUS.CA.
2. HEYS KIDS ROLLING DUFFEL BAG IN UNICORN, $60, SHOP.HEYS.CA.
3. JJ COLE FLORAL KNAPSACK DIAPER BAG, $90, WALMART.CA.
4. TRUNKI RIDE-ON SUITCASE IN TIPU TIGER, $70, TOYSRUS.CA.
5. PETUNIA PICKLE BOTTOM AXIS BACKPACK IN BIRCH AND BLACK, $140, WELL.CA.
6. SKIPHOP ZOO KIDS LUGGAGE IN MONKEY, $49, SHOPBENTLEY.COM.
7. SKIPHOP GRAND CENTRAL DIAPER BAG IN BLACK AND WHITE, $130, TOYSRUS.CA.
8. HEYS E-MOTION KIDS LUGGAGE IN RAINBOW, $100, SHOP.HEYS.CA.
Everything she wants to be.

Girlguides

girlguides.ca/joinup
1-800-565-8111
SAVE YOUR SKIN

There’s a reason our skin feels super parched in the winter months—it’s all of that hot, blasting indoor heat. Yup, our skin is thirsty. What skin needs most is water and, well, something to seal it in. Enter eight of our favourite moisturizing products for the face. Choose one that absorbs easily and slather it on least once a day—no one likes reptilian, scaly skin.

SHOP OUR FAVES

1. MARY KAY BOTANICAL EFFECTS MOISTURIZING GEL, $21, MARYKAY.CA.
2. OLAY REGENERIST MICRO-SCULPTING CREAM, FROM $33, OLAY.CA.
3. HARD CANDY SHEER ENZY DEWY ELIXIR GALACTIC GLOW, $9, WALMART.CA.
4. L’OREAL PARIS HYDRA GENIUS DAY & NIGHT MOISTURIZER, $25, LOREALPARIS.CA.
5. BURT’S BEES INTENSE HYDRATION DAY LOTION, $25, BURTSPBES.CA.
6. NIVEA CARE INTENSIVE NOURISHMENT NON-GREASY CREAM, FROM $13, NIVEA.CA.
7. DERMALOGICA CALM WATER GEL, $65, DERMALOGICA.CA.
8. NEUTROGENA HYDRO BOOST HYDRATING HYDROGEL MASK, FROM $4, NEUTROGENA.CA.

BREATHE EASY

Breathing is something we do on average 20,000 times per day. We do it without thinking (our bodies are truly amazing!). But how often do we really stop to check on how well we’re breathing? The fast-paced world we live in today results in many of us taking quick, short, shallow breaths, which is really inefficient when it comes to replenishing our systems. But according to Dr. Julia Sen, a registered clinical and counselling psychologist in Toronto, there’s a wonderful way to learn how to breathe more effectively: Watch an infant. (Yes, we’re giving you permission to do nothing but gaze at a new baby for a few minutes!) Babies breathe so deeply, so naturally and at such a perfect pace—if only we continued to breathe how we did when we were born. So, we need to remind ourselves of how it’s done. Sen’s favourite breathing exercise is so straightforward that it’s easy for even young children to do.

Here’s how to get yourself breathing deeply again: Inhale through your nose for a five-second count and then exhale through your nose or mouth for another five-second count. Repeat this cycle five to 10 times. That’s it! Sounds simple, but this focused breathing will help bring your body to a more relaxed state. Try this in the morning for a calm start to your day, and at night to help you and your brood have a good night’s sleep.
Help them shine.

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PROUDLY LEADING THE SCHOOL UNIFORM MARKET FOR OVER 60 YEARS, HAVING SERVED OVER 10 MILLION STUDENTS COAST TO COAST.
DEALING WITH DIAPERS IS ONE OF THE FIRST TASKS NEW PARENTS master (because it comes with a lot of on-the-job training) but a raw, red case of diaper rash can quickly cause a crisis of confidence. Here’s some info to ease your conscience and help you soothe your baby’s skin. —TAMMY SUTHERLAND

Frequent diaper changes are your best defense. “Try to prevent them from sitting in a soiled diaper for any extended period of time,” says Aumeerally. Sounds doable, but with babies peeing so often, it can seem impossible. That’s why you should also schedule some au natural time. “Keep the diaper off completely and let the area air dry,” says Aumeerally. “It could also be time to size up your diaper,” suggests Carew. “A looser fit allows more air to circulate.”

It happens to everyone
“It just physically being in a diaper causes close contact of urine and feces on the skin,” explains Nadia Aumeerally, a paediatrician in Halifax. That moisture combined with the baby’s body heat will cause diaper rash. If you add warm weather to the equation, it makes the situation even more likely. Christina Carew, a naturopathic doctor in Toronto, says that cases can occur more often in a hot climate or during the balmier months of the year.

Bring on the barrier cream
Since your baby can’t go commando all the time, Aumeerally and Carew both recommend using a good barrier cream during every diaper change. Look for products with zinc oxide, calendula or zinc chamomile. “You should definitely avoid baby powder,” Carew cautions, “because it traps the urine against the skin rather than letting it absorb into the diaper.”

Starting solids will probably make it worse
Don’t fret if those pureed sweet potatoes cause a flare-up. “As babies start eating more advanced foods, their stool changes,” says Aumeerally. “Their bowel movements could be more frequent or more liquidy, so the waste spreads around more.”

It won’t last for long
If you treat the area and give it plenty of opportunities to air out, it should go away very quickly,” promises Carew. But if those actions don’t make a difference, or if your baby seems especially uncomfortable, make an appointment to have your doctor check it out.
Some of us, who shall remain nameless, are in our late-thirties, married with two kids and still waiting for our parents to give us “the talk.” Leaving the explanation of all-things puberty-related to teachers (and peers) isn’t everyone’s strategy, but the truth is, figuring out the best way to broach this potentially embarrassing topic isn’t a cakewalk.

We generally know the approximate ages of when puberty hits boys and girls both physically and emotionally, but most of us aren’t as confident about when to broach the subject.

**WHEN.** Dr. Megan Harrison is a paediatric and adolescent health specialist at Ottawa’s Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario. She says the “right” time can differ from kid to kid (and from family to family) because they mature—emotionally and physically—at different ages. It’s important for parents to trust their instincts. “My experience has been that youth like to know what’s going to happen to their bodies before those changes actually start because it’s less scary,” she says, adding that chatting about normal changes in advance (or at the first onset of changes) normalizes what’s happening and “allows kids to check in with parents because the door is already open.” Tip: Don’t think you have to put aside a Sunday afternoon and have a full presentation prepared. “I always remind parents that these talks can be very short and general to start. Sometimes it’s better to have many brief conversations spread out so that the discussion can become more detailed as the child gets older. This isn’t a ‘one-time’ conversation,” says Dr. Harrison.

**HOW.** Bringing up the topic may seem even more daunting than actually having it. “You might start with comments here and there with younger children, like, “Isn’t it amazing how our bodies change throughout our lives? Our bodies are incredible—we start as babies, grow into children, then into adolescents, and then we grow into adults,”” she says. For older kids, you could comment on how they’re getting taller and tell them they’ll notice more changes as they continue to grow. (Some parents bring up the topic using books, which often works well with kiddos.) “The important thing to remember about these conversations is that children know that they can continue to ask their parents questions. Even if they seem embarrassed, the fact that parents have opened up a dialogue plants the seed for further discussion.”

Knowing what questions your kids might ask once the topic is out in the open can also make the situation easier. “Boys sometimes worry about their voice changing and ‘wet dreams,’ and girls tend to ask about breast development and menstrual periods,” says Dr. Harrison. “They often want to know how quickly these things will happen and if anything will hurt.” This is also the time when they’re developing their sense of body image and are usually more conscious of their appearance. “Puberty coincides with a lot of social changes, too, like managing relationships with friends. Questions about gender and sexuality may also come up,” she says. “The best thing parents can do is learn to listen to their children, reinforce the positive aspects of their kids’ development and be open to ongoing conversations about these subjects.” —LISA VAN DE GEYN
It doesn’t matter whether it’s a weekday, weekend or holiday—my son, Adam, rarely sleeps past 6:30 in the morning, 7 if we’re lucky. (And no, it doesn’t matter what time he goes to bed at night.) While I mourn my lost decade of beauty sleep, there’s a definite bonus to his internal clock: I’ve never needed to haul him out of bed on the first day back to school after winter break.

For many parents, however, Christmas vacation wreaks havoc on their kids—not only does it mess with sleep schedules, but it can also do a number on their eating habits, the amount of physical activity they get, and cause other issues with schedules and routines. Kids may think staying up all night, living on junk food and spending endless hours glued to the TV or playing video games is the perfect way to spend a couple weeks off school, but the harsh reality is that without some parent-imposed limitations, it can be a disaster getting them back on track in January. In fact, says Doone Estey, a parenting expert with Toronto-based Parenting Network and co-author of *Raising Great Parents*, “you want to keep to your schedule as much as you can, while avoiding the power struggles that can really make the holidays no fun.”

Sound impossible? Here are a few tips to help rein in your family throughout the festive season, without being a Grinch.

**PLAN AHEAD**
Get out the calendar and mark down when you’ll be with extended family and friends, and when you’ll have free time. Then slot in appointments, playdates and outdoor activities like skating and tobogganing to fill some of the holes. “Camps, social time, getting outside, going to the doctor, dentist or for a haircut—anything parents can do to keep their kids from staying on their screens all day is important,” says Estey. That said, you should throw in some of those anything-goes-let’s-stay-in-our-PJs days, too. “By building them into your schedule, they make you appreciate lazy days. But if every day is a lazy day, it just gets boring.”
INFORM THE KIDS
A week or two before the holidays, gather your crew to chat about what will happen over the break, suggests Estey. It’s a strategy that has worked well over the years for Ann Wong and her son Randy, now 12. “I sit down and tell him, ‘you have two weeks off. Here are the busy days when you may be staying up late, and the next morning I’ll let you sleep in an extra hour or so before waking you up,’” says Wong. “If we have family movie night, you’ll get extra screen time. And even though it’s the holidays and more relaxed, you still need to make your bed and stuff: ‘must dos’ before ‘want dos.’”

EXPLAIN YOUR REASONING
Expect some push back to your rules and be willing to negotiate a plan that works for everyone. But also be sure to tell your kids the reasons why these rules and routines are important. Yes, they get time off school and it’s the most wonderful time of the year, but lay it out. They need to know if they wake up and spend four hours playing video games, they’re going to feel depressed, says Estey. “If they eat only junk food and don’t get any exercise, they’re going to feel bad. If they see their friends and go outside and play, they’ll feel good.”

KEEP IT SIMPLE
Since Randy was little, Wong has reinforced simple rules. For example, if he asks for extra screen time because he’s bored, the rule is, “either find something to do, or I’ll give you something to do.” Before long, he’ll pick up a book or start building with Lego. Another simple rule: “Before you can have a treat, eat something healthy.” Even at parties, Randy would show her the carrot or celery stick he ate before taking a cookie or piece of candy. Estey had a similar strategy she’d use with her kids: She’d try to fill them full of veggies before leaving for get-togethers and parties so they “wouldn’t arrive starving and gorge on junk.”

LET THEM LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE
If your kids overindulge on Christmas cookies, screen time or sleeping in, avoid saying four little words you’re probably desperate to throw at them: “I told you so.” Instead, empathize when they get that resulting belly ache, can’t sleep at night or feel off because they didn’t get enough physical activity. “You can say, ‘Wow, you must have really overdone it. I’m so sorry,’” says Estey. With this non-judgemental approach, you’re more likely to create a learning opportunity so they won’t repeat mistakes. That’s what happened with Randy, who now realizes that too much screen time gives him a headache, and too many sweets make him feel terrible. “Now he’ll say, ‘Ugh, I’m over-sugared. I can’t have any more,’” says Won.
Films run with reduced sound and dim lights
Change tables, wipes, and stroller parking in theatre
Dads, friends, and caregivers always welcome!
Arrive early for your welcome package and enter to win door prizes

FOR LOCATIONS, SCREENINGS, AND SHOWTIMES VISIT
WWW.MOVIESFORMOMMIES.COM
HERE’S THE THING: Moms need to take time for themselves; self-care is really important. Becoming a mom is exciting, but for most of us, the first few weeks and months of motherhood are challenging. There’s lots to learn about our little ones—navigating our way through feeding schedules, sleep routines and trying to balance everything on our plates. Until we find our groove, it can also be isolating and we tend to put ourselves last.

To be at our best, moms need to be able to recharge their batteries. Self-care can be as simple as taking time for a manicure or spending an hour at the gym. But with a tot under 12 months in tow, it can be hard to get that break.

Enter Movies for Mommies (MFM), which was created for just this reason—to provide new parents with the opportunity for some much-deserved “me time.” MFM allows Mom to take her baby with her to the movies, and enjoy a grown-up outing. The good news? You and your babe can catch all the big releases this spring and summer, including Ocean’s 8, Jurassic World 2 and Mama Mia 2.

Canada’s original parent-and-baby film event launched 18 years ago in Toronto and now runs in cities across the country, with thousands of parents enjoying Hollywood’s latest and greatest adult flicks at their local theatres, in a baby-friendly environment.

How does a “baby-friendly” movie experience work? MFM screenings are weekly or bi-weekly matinees that run with reduced sound levels to protect sensitive ears. Lights are left dim to make nursing and feeding easy, and all screenings have change tables with wipes and hand sanitizer in the theatre so you don’t have to duck out and miss your show.

It’s not just a movie—it’s an event! Over the years, MFM has evolved into the quintessential mommy meet-up. When Halloween, Christmas, Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day roll around, MFM has local professional photographers on-site doing complimentary photo sessions for Mom and her babe. Movies for Mommies’ monthly pre-show events include guest speakers, “mocktail” parties, live demos and weekly door prizes. It’s really a great way to meet other new moms.

First Time Experiencing Movies for Mommies?
Here’s what you need to know:
These are grown-up movies, not animated kids’ movies. Given the adult content of the films, the suggested age of babies is newborn to a year old. If the little one is older than 12 months, parents should use their discretion as to whether or not to attend.

The younger the baby is, the more likely they are to sleep through the flicks. Second- and third-time parents have learned this—they start coming to movies when their wee ones are two or three weeks old.

Crying is permitted because, well, babies cry! Most settle down and sleep in the semi-dark theatre, but if your baby cries, that’s OK, you’re always amongst friends.

You will be able to hear the movie. Even with a few babies fussing, it won’t affect your experience. If there is one unsettled little film critic, the normal etiquette is for Mom to step out briefly to soothe them.

Bring the appropriate gear. The movie is best enjoyed by having your baby in a car seat, which rests safely on the seat beside you, or by wearing a baby wrap.

Make it a date! Dads and partners are always welcome at our screenings. If they’re on paternity leave or taking a day off, MFM is the perfect outing for a date afternoon, and you don’t have to worry about finding a babysitter.

Arrive early. All first-time visitors receive a MFM welcome package which includes amazing samples and offers, as well as a membership card, so allow enough time to stop at our welcome table.

Be in the know! Register online at moviesformommies.com to receive MFM’s weekly e-blast, and be the first to know about pre-show events, what’s playing, special offers and more!
TOO MUCH Magic?
Birthday parties straight off of Pinterest. Over-the-top Halloween costumes. Fairy doors and fairy gardens. Elaborate responses from Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. These days, it’s basically a full-time job to build whimsy into our kids’ lives. But the question is, are we going overboard to make childhood magical?

**BY ANTONIA WHYATT**

**MAKING THE RIGHT TYPE OF MAGIC**

As much as we like to scoff to the over-the-topness of it all, magic is an important element in a child’s development. But, it doesn’t have to cost a fortune or add to your worry lines. “Kids should have opportunities to engage in wonder,” says Dr. Andrea Breen, associate professor in the Department of Family Relations and Human Development at the University of Guelph. “But rather than spoon-feeding them magic, we’ve discovered that co-creating stories where the child is a participant in building a world is incredibly beneficial.”

Using their own imagination to co-create gets all types of neurons firing in children’s brains. Research shows that it’s important for development on every level, from working memory (a real challenge for kids with ADHD, dyslexia and dyspraxia), to procedural thinking and emotional development.

This is different to the more passive act of reading stories to children or upholding traditions that have been handed down, such as Santa and the tooth fairy. “Imagination and awe are important in terms of learning. If you think about looking at the stars—they require a leap of the imagination to understand—it is that sense of wonder and the fantastical that can allow us to do it,” says Dr. Breen. Building stories together also plays another major role: It gives children that cozy, connected feeling to their parents. Dr. Breen and her two children have an imaginary friend who is a purple dragon called Big Tummy. “It started when they didn’t want to have naps,” says Dr. Breen. “I made up a story about me as a three-year-old sneaking off to sleep. We’d visit places like the Himalayas or Jamaica, and the kids would participate in creating the adventures with me. They’re older now but they still get a kick out of Big Tummy. It joins them to each other and their own sense of childhood.”

**HOW TO KEEP YOUR SANITY AND STILL SPRINKLE SOME FAIRY DUST**

It’s all about tapping into doing the things you enjoy. If you’re not a natural born storyteller, don’t create an elaborate mythology. If crafting makes you break out in hives, dioramas aren’t for you. But if you’re having a riot leaving a trail of silver ‘unicorn blood’ or writing elaborate letters from the tooth fairy, you should absolutely go for it. It’s when it comes at the expense of your sanity that it’s time to rein it in. “When my eldest was five (she’s now 14) she was really into rainbows,” says journalist and mother of three Robin Raizel. “So I decided she would have a rainbow-themed birthday party with

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The contraband was placed in an anonymous, plastic shopping bag and handed to me surreptitiously over the lunch table when the kids weren’t looking. I checked inside, and there it was—my daughter’s Elf on the Shelf. We’d gone to the cottage of family friends for a swim the day before, and the elf was one of the toys Phoebe had stashed in her backpack, along with her Barbies. It was mid-July, so the elf was supposed to be at the North Pole, not lounging by a pool. We had violated at least five Elf on the Shelf rules, and my friends were in a dead panic. If it was glimpsed by one of their adorable, tow-headed children, the magic could be ruined. Permanently.

Originally, I hadn’t believed anyone could maintain the impossibly high bar of never letting their child touch the Elf, let alone putting it away after Christmas. Phoebe, my compulsive daughter with ADHD, certainly couldn’t keep her hands away, and if she decided her Elf was going to come on a car ride or balance on the bars of her scooter, who was I to stop her? After all, wasn’t that the point? She had to use her own imagination to create the fantasy—the Elf was just a prop. Still, I felt compelled to attempt to keep up with the Elf antics I saw both in our neighbourhood and online. But why?

There’s an intense pressure to make childhood magical. Shops are full of canopied princess beds, block-printed forts, fairy wings and super-hero capes, and with the advent of social media, the burden lives with us constantly. Yet for most of us child rearing feels like an exercise in managed chaos. How on earth do you find time to create a fairy tea party or a cardboard pirate ship when getting the kids fed and to bed is a major undertaking?

We all know this is true. But once in our own beds, that parental ticker-tape of self-doubt inevitably plays in our heads. And no wonder. We’re constantly bearing witness not only to our friends’ creative parenting successes but celebrities too: Have you seen actor Busy Philipps’ Elf on the Shelf dioramas? They’re so elaborate (ziplining to an antique birdcage, baking Rice Krispy treats in the shape of snowmen, taking marshmallow baths) they have helped earn 1.4 million followers and left almost every other parent on Instagram feeling inadequate. It feels like we are all supposed to be partaking in one giant magical caper until teenage hormones hit and the bubble bursts.

This is an exaggeration, of course, but it’s hard for parents to know when and where to pull out the whimsical stops. That’s why we asked the experts for their advice, so you know where to best direct your energy.

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a rainbow hot-air balloon piñata and rainbow jelly. The rainbow jelly took days: I had to make each colour and then layer it in a clear plastic cup and let it set completely before making more. But the papier-mâché for the piñata was worse. I loved making it in the third grade, so I figured this would be a cinch. It was a nightmarish week of making piñata after piñata that collapsed, with me up until midnight in tears, but determined. Finally, I made one so strong that no kid could break it. My husband had to murder it with a baseball bat to get it to open. I also invited too many kids. The party seemed like a success, but at the end my exhausted daughter told me, ‘Worst party ever!’ before running up to her room.”

**CHEATERS GUIDE TO MAGIC**

There’s a simple way out of the magic rabbit hole: Put down your phone. Stop searching Pinterest and parenting blogs for projects. But how will you get creative ideas, you ask? Go outside. Nature is one of the easiest places to find wonder. Dr. Breen knows this firsthand. “We were given a fish by a well-meaning friend,” says Dr. Breen. “At first, I was annoyed at having to clean the tank, but the fish ended up being great fun. We did research and found out all about fish cognition, how they recognize faces, have memory, etc.” Nature is magical: Trees communicate with each other, caterpillars are transformers, water turns into clouds. Finding the fantastical outside requires little effort from you as a parent, and is a delightful way to enjoy time with your children. After all, having the opportunity to look at the world around us through fresh eyes, is one of the most magical things about having kids in the first place.

Now that I’ve heard it from the experts, I’m almost glad we didn’t manage to keep the Elf on the Shelf in that plastic bag. Phoebe noticed it was missing soon after that lunch and was so distressed about its whereabouts that no amount of fantastical narrative could soothe her. Now I’m glad I didn’t try to keep up the magic pretense—at age nine, Phoebe’s ‘magic years’ are receding and soon the Elf will disappear altogether. She is entering the ‘age of reason,’ which means my bribes and manipulation will have to take a less ethereal and more material nature. So for now, I say long live the Elf and his summertime sojourns.

**DO create family traditions.** Getting your children involved will give them that cozy, connected feeling to you and to their childhoods.

**SKIP spoonfeeding the magic.** It is too passive to get those neurons firing.

**DO get out in nature.** Magic is everywhere, from silk-spinning spiders to starlight.

**LIMIT screen time.** Even if it’s watching nature documentaries. When kids watch TV, they experience someone else’s make-believe world instead of their own.

**DO feed the fantasy.** When your child sees a monster, ask what colour its eyes are, if it has claws, etc. When you read to your children, engage them with mind-opening questions, like “If you were a baby rabbit, what would you eat?”

**SKIP too many books on tape, because they’re just too passive to spark imagination (unless of course you’re on a car trip. Then anything goes).**

**DO mix in old-fashioned toys like wooden blocks, dolls or molding clay.**

**LIMIT toys that need batteries.** Creativity is stifled when the toy, rather than the child, directs the play.

**DO schedule downtime.** Make sure kids have free time every day to play on their own. Not only does it encourage creativity, but it teaches them to use their own resources to amuse or soothe themselves.

**DON’T run yourself ragged catering to fairy doors or sprinkling icing powder on the floor and placing Santa’s footsteps in it. (Don’t laugh—this is actually a thing.)**
Top Of Their Wishlist
THIS HOLIDAY!

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OUR SUPER-FANTASTIC-AWESOMELY-EXCELLENT TOY GUIDE

WE MOONLIGHTED AS ELVES THIS YEAR AND CURATED A SELECTION OF THE BEST TOYS FOR 2018. BE SURE TO CHECK OUT OUR LEGEND FOR VINTAGE-INSPIRED PICKS, WHAT'S HOT, WHAT'S KID-APPROVED AND MORE.

CLASSIC
These retro favourites will definitely please a new generation of kiddos.

TOT-TESTED
We asked Kids & Co., a national daycare franchise, to test a selection of toys. Find out what the littles loved.

HOT TREND
Slime, poop, unicorns and more—all the must-haves for 2018 are here.

STEM
Science, technology, engineering and math—FTW!
Babies and Toddlers

- **Lalaboom Tropical Sounds Activitree**, $30, toysrus.ca.

- **3-in-1 Switcharoo Table**, $40, littletikes.com.


- **Fisher-Price Learn With Me Zebra Walker**, $30, walmart.ca.
Baby Einstein Flip & Riff Keytar, $30, toysrus.ca.

LeapFrog Learning Friends 100 Words Book, $23, leapfrog.com.

VTech Batter Up & Bowl Sports Arena, $40, vtechkids.ca.

Lalaboom 5-in-1 Snap Beads 24-pc. $13, mastermindtoys.com.

Fisher-Price Laugh & Learn Smart Learning Home, $240, toysrus.ca.

Tiny Love Into the Forest Deluxe Gymini, $90, walmart.ca.
Preschoolers

LeapFrog Scoop & Learn Ice Cream Cart, $50, canadian Tire.ca.

Crayola Scribble Scrubbie Pets Scrub Tub Playset, $23, well.ca.

My First Bananagrams, $25, indigo.ca.

Antsy Pants Build & Play Fire Truck, $70, indigo.ca.
Fisher-Price Think & Learn Rocktopus, $70, walmart.ca.


Calico Critters Grand Department Store, $140, toysrus.ca.

Playmobil Ski Lodge, $90, indigo.ca.

Little Tikes STEM Jr. Wonder Lab, $150, indigo.ca.
Flushin’ Frenzy, $25, toysrus.ca.

Kumi Kreator Cool Maker Friendship Bracelet Maker, $40, indigo.ca.

Paw Patrol Walkie Talkies, $20, indigo.ca.

Crayola Colour Chemistry Lab Set, $30, well.ca.

Fingerlings Hugs, $40, mastermindtoys.com.

Poopsie Slime Surprise Pooey Puitton, $100, indigo.ca.

L.O.L. Surprise! Pearl Surprise, $47, mastermindtoys.com.

Pomsies Pets, $20, toysrus.ca.

LEGO Creator Treehouse Treasures, $40, walmart.ca.

Hot Wheels Retro Fireball Crash Playset, $80, indigo.ca.

VTech Kidi Star Karaoke Machine, $60, indigo.ca.

Build or Boom, $25, mastermindtoys.com.
Fitbit Ace Kids’ Activity Tracker, $130, fitbit.com.


Uno Dos Game, $10, indigo.ca.

Nintendo Labo Toy-Con 01 Variety Kit, $90, walmart.ca.

Kamigami Scarrax Scorpion Robotic Kit, $65, bestbuy.ca.

Cat Crimes, $20, scholarschoice.ca.
Thumbs Up Unicorn Speaker, $22, well.ca.

Playstation Classic Mini, $130, walmart.ca.

Pokemon Let's Go Pikachu for Nintendo Switch, $80, walmart.ca.

Super Mario Party for Nintendo Switch, $80, thesource.ca.

LEGO Harry Potter Hogwarts Express, $100, toysrus.ca.

Connect 4 Shots Game, $25, walmart.ca.

LittleBits Base Inventors Kit, $130, amazon.ca.
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SPECIAL OFFER
For a free registration, bring in this ad prior to August 31, 2019.
Our Favourite Gifts of 2018

It’s the most wonderful time of the year (after back to school, of course)! Get your wrapping paper ready—we’ve picked out the perfect presents (from $8 and up!) for everyone on your “nice” list.
$25 and under

Indigo Baby Christmas and Hanukkah Onesies, $13 each, indigo.ca.

Bon Chien Ceramic Dog Bowl, $8, winners.ca.


Vintage Inferno Hot Sauce & Spice Sets, $10 each, shoppersdrugmart.ca.

Ideal Sno Scapes Woodland Creatures, $25, well.ca.

Bon Chien Ceramic Dog Bowl, $8, winners.ca.

Mug, $12, indigo.ca.

Llamaste Spiral Notebook, $9, indigo.ca.

Metallic Mini-Deer Backpack, $17, marshalls.ca.

OMG 21 Clutch, $20, marshalls.ca.

Emoji Pampering Spa Set, $15, walmart.ca.

Half Moon and Star Earrings, $15, winners.ca.

Generation Geniuses Kids vs. Adults, $13, winners.ca.

Half Moon and Star Earrings, $15, winners.ca.

Women’s Velvet Faux-Fur Pompom Slippers, $17, oldnavy.ca.

OMG 21 Clutch, $20, marshalls.ca.
$50 and under


Unicorn Snot Lip Gloss Gift Set, $50, well.ca.

Diffuser speaker, $50, homesense.ca.

2019 Weekly Planner, $43, staples.ca.

Whiskey in a Teacup $45, indigo.ca.

Love and Lore Velvet Quilted Crossbody Bag in Grey, $35, indigo.ca.

Basd Holiday Box, $50, basdbodycare.ca.

Drake General Store Men's Work Week Sock Pack, $30, well.ca.

Toddler Girls' Holographic Princess Cat Hat and Mittens Set, $27, thechildrensplace.com.

Beaver Canoe Blanket Dog Coat in Blue, from $43, petsmart.ca.

Boys' Preschool Yeti Camping Raglan Long-Sleeve Shirt, $27, under armour.ca.

Cujo: The Untold Story Of My Life On and Off the Ice, $34, indigo.ca.

Drake General Store Men’s Work Week Sock Pack, $30, well.ca.

2019 Weekly Planner, $43, staples.ca.

Whiskey in a Teacup $45, indigo.ca.

Love and Lore Velvet Quilted Crossbody Bag in Grey, $35, indigo.ca.
Faux-Fur Leather Gloves in JF Black, $24, and Faux-Fur Scarf in Grey, $29, joefresh.ca.

Unicorn Plush Sleeping Bag, $60, homesense.ca.

Fujifilm Instax Mini 9 Instant Camera in Ice Blue, $90, amazon.ca.

Ariana Grande Cloud Perfume 50ML, $59, shoppersdrugmart.ca.

Google Home mini in chalk, $80, staples.ca.

Popflix Cinema-Style Kettle Popcorn Popper, $90, walmart.ca.

Under the Christmas Tree Breakaway Face and Eye Set, $52, sephora.ca.

In Deckung Watch, $60, flikflak.com.
Splurge-worthy

**Black Marble 26-IN. Fashion Spinner Luggage**, $400, shop.heys.ca.

**Kobo Forma E-Reader**, $300, ca.kobobooks.com.

**Xbox One S 1TB Console Two-Controller Bundle Plus Free Game**, from $380, microsoft.com.

**Dyson Cyclone V10 Absolute vacuum**, $800, dysoncanada.ca.

**Sylvania RCA Smart Android Wi-Fi Home Theatre Projector**, $298, walmart.ca.

**HP Sprocket Photo Printer**, $150, staples.ca.


**Women’s Snowday Tall Lightweight Insulated Boots**, $160, bogsfootwear.ca.

You know there are ingredients that, by their very nature, are more likely to get a “yuck!” from your brood. We’re aiming to change that. If you’ve got fruit-averse kiddos in your house, these festive little jewels might just be the answer. And don’t think citrus is the only possibility either: Try chocolate-dipped strawberries or blackberries, apple slices or chunks of banana.
**Chocolate-Dipped Clementines with Pistachios**

2 of dark or semi-sweet melting chocolate or chocolate chips  
1 clementine oranges (or other seedless citrus fruit)  
$\frac{1}{4}$-$1$ tbsp coconut oil  
$\frac{1}{4}$ cup pistachios, very finely chopped

1. Melt chocolate and coconut oil together in the microwave or over a double-boiler. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. Separate the citrus segments and pull off any excess stringy bits. (They do not go well with chocolate!) Dip one side of each segment into the melted chocolate, then place on the prepared baking sheet.

3. Sprinkle with pistachio dust immediately, before chocolate has a chance to set. Chocolate-dipped oranges can be kept in the fridge for a couple of days, but they’re best eaten right away. If refrigerated, bring to room temperature before serving.

*Kids not into pistachios? Try garnishing with other finely chopped nuts, sprinkles or nonpareil candy.*
One cookie dough, THREE WAYS
This delish sugar cookie mix will become a staple in your kitchen. It’s super-easy (let the kids take the lead!) and wonderfully versatile, so it can show up on a holiday dessert plate in many forms.

**Never-Fail Sugar Cookie Dough**  
**HANDS-ON TIME:** 10 MINUTES  
**CHILLING TIME:** 1 HOUR  

- ¾ cup unsalted butter, cubed  
- 1 cup granulated sugar  
- 1 large egg  
- 1 tsp vanilla  
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour  
- ½ tsp baking powder  
- ¼ tsp salt

1. In large bowl, beat together butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in egg and vanilla until just incorporated, scraping down sides as needed. In medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt; stir into butter mixture until just incorporated.

2. Divide dough into two discs, wrap in plastic wrap, and chill for 1 hour. Allow to come to room temperature for 10-15 minutes before rolling.

3. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F. When cookies are done chilling, transfer to oven and bake, rotating pans halfway through, until bottoms are golden, 10-12 minutes. Allow to cool completely on racks before glazing.

**FOR THE GLAZE:** In medium bowl, whisk together 2 cups icing sugar and 4 tbsp fresh lemon juice. (If mixture seems too thick, continue adding lemon juice, 1 tbsp at a time, until desired consistency). Separate glaze into two or three shallow bowls and tint with food colouring as desired.

3. Holding cookies by the edge, gently dip tops in glaze to coat, letting excess drip back into bowl; transfer to wire rack with parchment below to catch drips. If using sprinkles, allow glaze to set for a few minutes before adding them to avoid colour run. Let cookies stand until set, about 1 hour.

**Lemon-Glazed Snowflake Cookies**  
**HANDS-ON TIME:** 25 MINUTES  
**CHILLING TIME:** 5 HOURS 20 MINUTES  
**TOTAL TIME:** 6 HOURS 40 MINUTES  
**YIELD:** 35-40 COOKIES

1. Make 1 batch of Never-Fail Sugar Cookie Dough. After you divide the finished dough, return one half to bowl and gently mix in a few drops of blue food colouring until incorporated. Proceed as directed.

2. Working 1 disc at a time, roll out dough between two sheets of plastic wrap until ¼ inch thick. Using snowflake-shaped cookie cutters, cut out shapes (re-rolling and cutting dough scraps as needed). Place cookies 1 inch apart, on large, parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Refrigerate until firm, about 20 minutes.

3. Sprinkle clean work surface with ½ cup decorating sugar; unwrap dough log and roll in sugar until coated. Slice log crosswise into ¼ inch slices. Arrange cookies 2 inch apart on large, parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Refrigerate until firm, about 20 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F. When cookies are done chilling, bake, rotating pans halfway through, until edges are golden, 10-12 minutes.

**Sparkling Blizzard Swirl Cookies**  
**HANDS-ON TIME:** 25 MINUTES  
**CHILLING TIME:** 5 HOURS 20 MINUTES  
**TOTAL TIME:** 6 HOURS 40 MINUTES  
**YIELD:** 35-40 COOKIES

1. Make 1 batch of Never-Fail Sugar Cookie Dough. Chill as directed.

2. Working 1 disc at a time, roll out dough between two sheets of plastic wrap until ¼ inch thick. Using round fluted cookie cutters, cut out shapes (re-rolling and cutting dough scraps as needed). Using a small, circular cookie cutter, cut peephole out of centre of half the cookies. Place cookies 1 inch apart, on large, parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Refrigerate until firm, about 20 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F. When cookies are done chilling, transfer to oven and bake, rotating pans halfway through, until bottoms are golden, 8-10 minutes. Allow to cool completely on racks before filling.

3. In small bowl, whisk ½ cup desired jam until smooth. Spread 1 scant tsp of jam over bottoms of each whole cookie, leaving ¼ inch border along edges. Sandwich with cut-out cookies, flat sides down, pressing to adhere.

**Classic Jam-Filled Cookie Sandwiches**  
**HANDS-ON TIME:** 40 MINUTES  
**CHILLING TIME:** 1 HOUR 20 MINUTES  
**TOTAL TIME:** 2 HOURS 40 MINUTES  
**YIELD:** 15-20 SANDWICH COOKIES

1. Make 1 batch of Never-Fail Sugar Cookie Dough. Chill as directed.

2. Working 1 disc at a time, roll out dough between two sheets of plastic wrap until ¼ inch thick. Using round fluted cookie cutters, cut out shapes (re-rolling and cutting dough scraps as needed). Place cookies 1 inch apart, on large, parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Refrigerate until firm, about 20 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 350°F. When cookies are done chilling, bake, rotating pans halfway through, until bottoms are golden, 8-10 minutes. Allow to cool completely on racks before filling.

3. In small bowl, whisk ½ cup desired jam until smooth. Spread 1 scant tsp of jam over bottoms of each whole cookie, leaving ¼ inch border along edges. Sandwich with cut-out cookies, flat sides down, pressing to adhere.
HOW BIG A TURKEY, ROAST OR HAM DO I NEED TO BUY?

This is really three different questions, because the rule of thumb isn’t the same for all types of meat (the meat itself isn’t exactly the same weight, and neither are the bones).

**TURKEY**
For turkey, it’s very easy: one pound equals one serving. So if you’re going to need at least an eight-pound bird. But, if you’re counting on leftovers, or if you intend to use the turkey carcass for broth or soup, you’re going to want to add some weight in order to have the turkey go farther.

**ROAST BEEF**
When it comes to roast beef, calculate ½ pound per person to be safe. If your roast is bone-in, you will want to go up to a pound per serving, to account for the weight of the bone. Again, if you’re counting on leftovers for roast beef sandwiches or beef-barley soup, buy a roast a couple of pounds heavier than what you need for dinner.

**HAM**
The serving weight for ham is a bit smaller: Experts estimate people will eat ¼ of a pound per serving. Again, account for the ham bone if you’re purchasing bone-in (in this case you’ll need ½ lb per guest), and buy a slightly heavier ham if you’re hoping to have leftovers.

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GEAR TO GET

**POTATO RICER**
If there’s one gadget (well, this one is more of a utensil) you should have in your kitchen this holiday season, it’s a potato ricer. It sort of looks like an oversized garlic press, with a perforated basket on one side, where you put a cooked potato, and a flat disc on the other side. When the two sides are pressed together, the disc pushes the potato through the holes of the basket (this is a great job for a small sous chef, if the potatoes aren’t too hot and kids can be trusted to keep their fingers out of the way). The result? The smoothest mashed potatoes in the land.

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OFF THE SHELF

Supermodel and super-famous Instagrammer Chrissy Teigen is unapologetically driven by a deep craving for delicious food. In her second cookbook, Cravings: Hungry for More (to follow up Cravings in 2016) Teigen takes us on a spin through some surprising culinary mash-ups that reflect her travels and Thai heritage (there’s even a chapter called “Thai Mom”). We love her Pad Thai Carbonara on p. 148—a crazy combination of Thai and Italian flavours (think fish sauce and bacon), and the Red Chicken Curry on p. 167 represents the perfect balance of salty and sweet that Thai food is famous for. We also love her good, old-Southern Chicken & Dumplings (p. 185), the simple Moroccan Veggie Couscous (p. 193) and the tastiest Sesame Salmon Soba Salad (p. 218), but we knew we were absolute goners after tasting the Chicken Teriyaki Burgers with Toasted Coco Buns (p. 73). The simple addition of coconut sprinkled on buttered buns make these chicken burgers unlike anything you’ve ever tasted before. If you’re looking to add an international spin to your recipe repertoire, take your taste buds on a trip around the world with this gorgeous book (and check out Teigen on Instagram for more food, LOL captions and pictures of her adorable kiddos with hubs John Legend!). —BONNIE YOUNG
Let the slowcooker do the hard work for you with this hearty, comforting chili. Toasting the spices just before adding them helps boost their flavour, lending more dimension to the dish.

**Slowcooker Chicken Chili**

**HANDS-ON TIME** 25 MINUTES  
**TOTAL TIME** 6-7 HOURS  
**SERVES** 4

1. In slow cooker, stir together tomatoes, beans, broth, tomato paste, onion, garlic, celery, red pepper, salt, and pepper until combined.

2. Heat small, dry skillet over medium heat. When skillet is hot, add chili powder, oregano, smoked paprika, and cumin. Stir frequently until fragrant, about 30 seconds-1 minute. Transfer directly to tomato mixture and stir to combine.

3. Nestle chicken breasts in tomato mixture until halfway submerged. Cook on HIGH for 3-4 hours or on LOW for 6-7 hours, or until instant-read thermometer inserted in chicken reads 165°F. Transfer chicken to cutting board and shred using two forks; return to chili and stir in. Taste and season with additional salt and pepper as needed. Serve with desired toppings.

**TIP** Rather than plating the chili in the kitchen, set up a small toppings bar so that kids can pick and choose from the toppings they prefer.

<table>
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<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1 can</td>
<td>(796mL)</td>
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<td>sodium-reduced mixed beans</td>
<td>2 cans</td>
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<td>sodium-reduced chicken broth</td>
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<td>tomato paste</td>
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<td>small onion, cut into ½ inch pieces</td>
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<td>cloves garlic, grated or minced</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>celery, cut into ½ inch pieces</td>
<td>2 ribs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>red pepper, cut into ¼ inch slices</td>
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<tr>
<td>salt</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freshly ground black pepper</td>
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<tr>
<td>chili powder</td>
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<tr>
<td>smoked paprika</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>cumin</td>
<td>1 tsp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boneless, skinless chicken breasts</td>
<td>450g</td>
<td>(1.5 lbs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SERVE WITH** fresh pita bread, sour cream, sliced avocado and grated cheddar cheese

**PORTIONS**
- 1 can diced tomatoes (796mL)
- 2 cans sodium-reduced mixed beans (540 mL)
- 1 cup sodium-reduced chicken broth
- 5 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 small onion, cut into ½ inch pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, grated or minced
- 2 ribs celery, cut into ½ inch pieces
- 1 red pepper, cut into ¼ inch slices
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tbsp chili powder
- 2 tsp oregano
- 1 ½ tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp cumin
- 450g boneless, skinless chicken breasts

**SUPPER IS SOLVED | KITCHEN TABLE**
It’s not ALL about the kids

Well, maybe it is. But it’s easier to be great parents when we take time for ourselves.

This fall, boost your parenting energy with a getaway to Muskoka.

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*Resort Fee and tax are additional, subject to availability, prices subject to change without notice
The holidays are stressful enough without a menu of complex recipes to pull off for friends and family (who wants to spend all day in the kitchen when there’s fun to be had?). That’s why we went to cookbook author Claire Tansey—whose new cookbook *Uncomplicated* is all about keeping it simple and delicious—for a feast that comes together in a snap.
Dry-Brined Turkey

**SERVES 8 TO 10  **
**PREP TIME 20 MINUTES  **
**TOTAL TIME 20 MINUTES OR LESS  **
**READY IN ABOUT 27 HOURS  **

**Dried brown sugar  **
1½ cups kosher salt  
1 fresh turkey (13 to 15 pounds/6 to 7 kg)  
1 bunch fresh thyme, parsley or sage, or a combination  
3 tablespoons canola oil  

I’ve never understood exactly why brining works so well on roast turkey, but it really does make it more moist and flavourful. What I do understand, and what stays with me, is the reaction I get from guests when I serve this bird. Hands-down, it’s the best turkey they’ve ever eaten. It’s turkey magic. This roast also looks spectacular, and is always the centrepiece of my Thanksgiving table. I serve it with easy sides like Make-Ahead Scalloped Potatoes and Balsamic Roasted Vegetables. The bones also make terrific soup.

Dry-brining is much less complicated than wet-brining since you don’t need a vessel in which to submerge a turkey and keep it cold. It is absolutely critical that you use kosher salt for this, preferably Diamond Crystal. Regular salt is too fine and will permeate the fibres of the turkey, ruining everything.

1. Combine brown sugar with kosher salt in a medium bowl. Place the turkey in a large plastic bag (I use a grocery bag, checking first that it has no holes) and place the bag in a roasting pan.
2. Pack the sugar mixture all over the breast, legs and wings of the turkey, pressing firmly so as much of the mix sticks as possible. Carefully close up the bag, just for neatness, then pop it into the fridge (or a room that is colder than 39°F/4°C but above freezing) for 24 to 36 hours.
3. About 4 hours before you want to sit down for supper, preheat the oven to 325°F. Take the turkey out of the bag and rinse it under cold running water, gently rubbing it until every last speck of the brining mixture comes off. Don’t forget to rinse out the inside, too.
4. Place the turkey on a rack in a roasting pan and dry it with paper towels. Place the thyme in the cavity and tie the legs together with twine. Bend and tuck the wing tips under the back. Brush the turkey all over with the canola oil.
5. Roast 3 to 3½ hours or until a thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh reads 175°F. Transfer the turkey to a carving board and tent loosely with foil. Let rest at least 30 minutes and as much as an hour before.

**TIPS**

1. Resting meat of any size, but especially large roasts, is arguably the most important step. During its rest, the meat’s juices will redistribute themselves and make the meat juicy and flavourful. It will also be easier to carve. The roast will cool down a little, but not enough to notice.
2. Save those bones and use them to make Slow-Cooker Chicken Stock.
The trouble with traditional scalloped potatoes—as I used to see it—is that they go into the oven raw, and then take an age to cook. In the old days I would poke them again and again, hoping they'd be tender before the pan got dry. So frustrating. But the solution is to par-cook the potatoes (and as a bonus, cook them in cream!) or even pre-cook the whole dish.

Yukon Golds are my go-to all-purpose potato, but you can use any yellow-fleshed variety here. I don’t peel my potatoes, but if you’d prefer a perfectly smooth dish, then go right ahead. It won’t change the cooking time. These are terrific with Dry-Brined Turkey, Easy Maple-Mustard Ham, Soy and Garlic Grilled Flank Steak or Herb and Garlic Meatloaf.

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Grease a 9- x 13-inch baking dish (or other 12- to 14-cup baking dish) with butter.

2. Scrub the potatoes, then slice them very thinly—about 1/16 inch—or run them through a mandoline (see Tip). The important thing here is to make the slices the same thickness. Place the slices in a large pot. Sprinkle in the salt and garlic, then pour in the cream and milk. Season with pepper. Bring to a gentle boil over medium heat, stirring gently. Boil gently for 2 minutes.

3. Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking dish, arranging the potatoes in an even layer. The cream mixture should be just below the level of the potatoes. Place the dish on a rimmed baking sheet to catch any spill-over. Sprinkle with the Parmesan.

4. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until bubbly and browned. Check after about 25 minutes, and if the top is getting quite brown, tent the dish with foil for the remaining cooking time.

TIP A mandoline is a slicing gadget. You can find inexpensive plastic ones in kitchenware shops. Make sure to use the finger guard every time! If your food processor has a slicing blade, that’s fine here as well, but if it has variable thickness do not use the thinnest setting. Slices shouldn’t be thinner than 1/8 inch.
This glorious dish is another one of my secret, make-in-advance entertaining recipes. These roasted vegetables go well with any kind of main course, from Naked Burgers to Maple–Garlic Cedar Salmon to Dry-Brined Turkey, or even alongside a simple cheese and charcuterie board for a truly effortless supper.

1. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. Combine the onion, Japanese eggplants, sweet red peppers, and zucchini on the prepared baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil and toss well to coat. Spread into an even layer. Drizzle with balsamic vinegar and sprinkle with salt.

3. Roast, stirring once, 45 to 55 minutes or until vegetables are tender and deep golden at the edges.

4. Sprinkle with feta and basil (if using) and serve.

MAKE AHEAD: Roast the vegetables but don’t add the cheese and basil. Keep at room temperature for up to 4 hours. Reheat at 425°F for 5 to 10 minutes, then finish with the cheese and basil.
Gingerbread Bundt Cake with Lemon Glaze
PREP TIME 15 MINUTES READY IN ABOUT 15 MINUTES OR LESS SERVES 12

Although we tend to associate gingerbread with Christmas, this cake is welcome year-round, and particularly on lazy weekends when everyone stays in their pyjamas until noon. This cake looks and tastes spectacular, so it’s good enough for company, or even a birthday party.

Bundt cakes are especially simple since they don’t need to be frosted to look gorgeous; in fact, frosting them would be a nightmare! This glazed beauty was inspired by a gorgeous bundt pan I was given several years ago; any cake baked in it gets rave reviews.

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F. Spray a 10-cup Bundt pan generously with non-stick baking spray.

2. To make the Gingerbread Bundt, whisk the flour with ginger, cinnamon, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs well. Whisk in canola oil, then sugar and molasses. Pour the egg mixture into the flour mixture and stir well. Add hot water and stir well.

3. Scrape the batter into the prepared pan. Bake 55 minutes or until a cake tester inserted into the centre comes out clean. Let cool in the pan on a rack 10 minutes. Store in the refrigerator in an airtight container or bag for up to one week.

4. To make the Lemon Glaze, whisk the icing sugar with the lemon juice until smooth.

5. Flip the cake out onto a rack set over a baking sheet. Let cake cool for another 5 minutes, then poke deep holes all over the cake using a long skewer. Drizzle glaze all over cake, trying to get some into each hole, and brushing the glaze so it covers the entire surface of the cake. Serve warm or let cool completely.

TIP Always buy fancy molasses for baking. Cooking molasses is too bitter for cakes.

MAKE AHEAD Make and glaze the cake up to 1 day in advance of serving. Store at room temperature.
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How to: Decide if a birthing centre is right for you

If you’re debating about a hospital birth, consider a birthing centre—they’re great alternatives for some mamas. By Gabriela Perdomo

Elanie Lapointe didn’t want to give birth to her first child in a hospital, but the thought of having her baby in her small condo wasn’t appealing either. Luckily, her February due date coincided with the opening of the Ottawa Birth and Wellness Centre, and Lapointe was able to have her baby girl in a homey environment. “It was even better than I expected,” she says. “The atmosphere was so relaxing, I think it helped the labour.”

Birth centres are an option for women with low-risk pregnancies who are under the care of a midwife. They’re designed to provide a home-like, non-institutional environment to have a baby, says Wendy Grimshaw, executive director of the Ottawa facility. In fact, the birthing rooms look more like fancy hotel suites—they’re equipped with fireplaces, comfortable furniture, luxury bedding and large birthing tubs. Moms-to-be can control the temperature and lighting, as well as who is able to visit the room. Because these places are fully operated by midwives, labouring women don’t have access to hospital-based interventions such as epidurals or narcotic pain killers. However, pain management tools such as birthing balls, stools and suspended slings are provided, as well as some procedures like water injections and nitrous oxide.

Lapointe felt being at the centre during labour and delivery was empowering, mostly because it provided the relaxed atmosphere and unmedicated birth she had hoped for. The thing is, birthing centres really aren’t for every family. Expectant parents who have a midwife should think about where they’ll feel the most comfortable and what’s best for the mom-to-be and the new arrival. If you’re not sure where to start in your decision-making, here are two big factors to consider.

There’s no clinical intervention. You may feel like a birthing centre gives you the comforts of home, but it also gives you the services you’d have if you were having your baby in your own bedroom. There are no doctors or nurses at birthing centres (they’re run by midwives), you won’t get access to narcotic pain killers and, says Grimshaw, “there is no more clinical intervention than in a home birth.” There are emergency protocols in place if patients need to be transferred to a hospital. You can also request to be moved if you change your mind and decide you want to proceed with an epidural.

You’ll need a backup plan. Birth centres only admit patients who are in active labour, and it’s first-come, first-served—unlike hotels, there’s no reservation desk. This means that you and your midwife should have a backup, in case there are no rooms available when you’re ready to check in.
Help Babies Get More Sleep

Are you the sleep-deprived parent of a newborn? Welcome to the club. Good news: There are things you can do to help. **By Dr. Nicky Cohen**

While some wee ones don’t seem to do much but eat, sleep and poop, other babies are fussy, active and spend more time awake than in dreamland. No matter where your babe falls, there’s plenty to learn about baby’s sleep, from safety guidelines to schedules.

**The Basics.** The total hours babies sleep can vary. Expect little ones to sleep for 10 to 18 hours in a 24-hour period (average is 15 to 15 hours). Premature babies may sleep more than those born full-term. When they sleep and wake are linked to hunger and feelings of fullness, and breastfed babies generally sleep for one to three hours at a time. Newborns start sleeping for longer periods at a time once they reach six to 12 weeks old.

**Safety.** Babies should be put to sleep on their backs until they’re 12 months—this position is associated with a reduced risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). They should sleep on firm, flat surfaces (whether they’re in a crib or bassinet), their room should be kept cooler than warmer (overheating is risk factor for SIDS) and cribs should be away from curtains, blind cords, lamps and electrical plugs (so little hands don’t grab them). Smokers should never be near babies or wherever babies sleep—exposure to smoke is one of the greatest risk factors for SIDS.

**Develop a Soothing Sleep Routine.** Within the first few weeks, parents can start a bedtime routine (and even a routine for naps). Routines should be calming and predictable—start at the same time every night with a bath, massage, pajamas, feeding and singing a song. (Or whatever works best for your baby.) A nap routine may consist of a feed, diaper change and song.

**Put Them to Sleep Drowsy, But Awake.** Once they’re drowsy, put them in their cribs and see if they can fall asleep on their own. (Fingers crossed!) At this young age, some babies grasp the skill pretty quickly (and start sleeping for longer periods of time), while others don’t. If yours has trouble going to sleep alone, keep trying. This skill develops as they grow and yes, requires practice.

**Day/Night Reversal.** Some newborns tend to sleep more during the day than at night. (Not ideal!) Parents can help reverse their sleeping patterns by keeping lights dim and noise to a minimum during nighttime feeds and diaper changes. In the daytime, it’s best to keep them in rooms with lots of light and normal levels of noise, and engage them in play so they’re less likely to doze off.
Avoid Overusing Negative Words

Count the number of times you find yourself saying (yelling) “don’t,” “no” and “stop it” each day. Now learn how to, er, stop it. **By Kristi York**

Growing up, toddler

ParentsCanada.com

Winter 2018

JOSH WILLINK

Avoid Overusing Negative Words

Count the number of times you find yourself saying (yelling) “don’t,” “no” and “stop it” each day. Now learn how to, er, stop it. **By Kristi York**

During her daughter Abby’s second year, Laurel Lavell felt like a Negative Nelly. “I found I was saying ‘no’ to her all the time,” says the mom of two from Waterloo, Ont. “I was trying to guide her behaviour and keep her safe, but it was becoming tiresome and irritating for both of us.”

Lavell was also concerned that constantly using the word “no” would make it lose its effectiveness. “I wanted to save it for urgent and emphatic situations,” she says. “And I certainly didn’t want my daughter to start tuning me out at a year old!” So she decided to expand her vocabulary and try a new strategy.

“I realized I was relying on ‘no’ in every situation, so I started choosing more specific words,” she says. If her kiddo approached the fireplace or stove, Lavell would firmly say “danger” and lead her away. If Abby pulled on Lavell’s necklace, she’d respond by saying “gentle” and guiding Abby’s hand to touch it softly instead. Finding alternatives to “no” can be worth the effort, according to Dr. Sandra Wiebe, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Alberta, and director of the Alberta Brain and Cognitive Development Lab in Edmonton. “Constant negativity is frustrating for both the parent and the child. Parents may feel ineffective if the child doesn’t comply, and children may feel as if they are only receiving negative attention.”

The first step to cutting back on throwing out “no” is to assess your home for potential safety risks. An age-appropriate play space free from hazards (stairs, sharp corners, exposed electrical outlets, etc.) helps keep toddlers safe and gives parents a break from having to verbally rein them in all the time.

**Use Your Tone.** In addition to choosing the right words, parents can also communicate more effectively through tone of voice. “Babies pick up on parental emotions through tone and facial expression before they understand what the words mean, and this carries over into the toddler years,” says Dr. Wiebe. This means that parents should pay attention not only to the words they’re saying, but how they say them. For example, saying the word “slowly” in a warning, measured tone will communicate the idea of proceeding with caution.

**Don’t Forget About Positivity and Praise.** As with most behaviour strategies, positivity and praise are key components to help little ones learn to make good decisions. “Ultimately, parents want children to internalize their standards and regulate their own behaviour, even when mom or dad isn’t around,” says Dr. Wiebe. “A factor that seems to promote this process is a warm, positive relationship with the parent. One study found that toddlers who had more upbeat and encouraging interactions with their mothers were better at complying with their mothers’ instructions not to play with some attractive toys, even when unsupervised.”

Cutting back on “no” isn’t about monitoring toddlers any less; it’s about using more expressive language to direct their behaviour. Lavell applied this tactic with Abby and was able to avoid the “tuning out” effect—hopefully for good, or at least until the teen years.
HELP KIDS HANDLE STAGE FRIGHT

With holiday and winter pageants around the corner, ’tis the season to help your kiddos conquer their fear and nerves. BY SARA DIMMERMAN, PSYCHOLOGIST

Students across Canada are busily preparing for their annual school concerts. And the odds are that most of them will be a bit uneasy about getting up on stage—whether they’re playing one of the wise men, presenting the story of Hanukkah or singing about winter wonderlands.

While talking with one young girl about her anxiety, I asked if she could remember the first time she experienced symptoms associated with it. She easily recalled standing at the front of her class when the first wave of panic passed through her. She said her heart started beating more rapidly, her mouth became dry and her hands felt weak. She got through her short presentation, but the experience left her not wanting to feel the same ever again. That evening, she shared what had happened with her mother, who offered to speak to her teacher. He suggested he’d accommodate her by allowing her to present to him alone during lunch—it was a relief for the girl and her mom.

But two years later, and still feeling anxious, her mother called me to help. When asked what she felt was the best way to overcome her anxiety of speaking in front of her classmates, she astutely shared that in order conquer it, she’d need to do what she was afraid of. She was absolutely right.

For children who are younger, I sometimes share the story of the fear monster and how avoiding him only makes him bigger and stronger. It is like, I say, feeding the fear monster. The only way to have the fear monster shrivel up and disappear is to confront him.

However, I know that this is often easier said than done. It’s hard to confront the fear monster if you don’t have the tools or the self-confidence to stand up to him. So, often children are helped by recognizing the warning signs of feeling afraid, where in their bodies the feelings are most intense and how to calm themselves. They are also helped by knowing that fear is a normal human emotion and that they don’t have to get rid of fear, just know how to face it.

It’s often helpful to give children the words to say inside of their heads. Words such as, “I know why I am feeling this way—I don’t want to embarrass myself in front of my peers. But nothing bad is going to happen. I won’t freak out or run out of the classroom. All of my classmates probably feel the same as me when they’re up here, too. I’m going to do my best and when it’s over I’ll feel proud for doing it.” I know this is a long script, but depending on your child, it can be condensed or just discussed ahead of time.

Most kids (and adults, for that matter) prefer not to have all eyes on them. They also fear forgetting their lines in a play, lyrics in a song or steps in a dance. Children who fall in this majority should be told their feelings are quite common—plenty of people feel this way. Normalizing fear is important, but so is helping kids recognize that running away from fear makes what they’re afraid of worse. With coaching from parents (or in more extreme situations, getting professional help), they can work toward developing the confidence to participate in performances and other activities in front of audiences.
HELP KIDS LEARN TO COPE WITH STRESS

Kids get anxious. Hard stop. But news flash: cortisol (some, anyway) isn’t only inevitable, it’s good for everyone. It’s all about healthy ways to deal.

BY LISA EVANS

SANTI VEDRÍ

HOW TO:

HELP KIDS LEARN TO COPE WITH STRESS

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tanley Kutcher, a professor of psychiatry at Dalhousie University in Halifax, says little bits of normal stress is good for everyone, but especially for children. “It’s necessary, adaptive and it builds their coping mechanisms. If we interfere in the natural growth and development that’s driven by normal stress, we screw kids up.”

The argument that we should allow kids to experience stress may seem confusing, since we live in a world where the word “stress” is red-flagged as harmful to our well-being. Everywhere you turn, there’s something telling us how to reduce stress and studies that link it to weight gain, heart attacks and even cancer.

But some research, including a University of California study from 2013, shows brief episodes of stress can provide cognitive benefits, including improvements in memory and learning.

Kirstin Aschbacher, an author of the University of California study, likens these benefits of stress to exercise. “If we lift weights, there’s a certain amount of physiological stress we’re putting on our body in that moment. Then we take a break and we allow our tissues to recuperate and our bodies become stronger through that process.”

But just as overdoing it during your workout can cause your muscles to be sore the next day, too much stress can be harmful. Small bursts of everyday stressors such as stress caused by homework, busy schedules and clashes with friends can be helpful to developing kids’ stress muscles. But chronic anxiety can be damaging, says Michele Kambolis, a counsellor and registered therapist, mental health specialist and author of Generation Stressed. It’s the only type of stress that we need to worry about managing, since it can make us more vulnerable to illness.

DESCRIBING STRESS IN A HEALTHY WAY.

One way to do this, says Kambolis, is to relabel the sensations we feel. While some kids might say they feel “jumpy” or “antsy,” suggesting they find different words to describe their feelings can help them pay closer attention to what the feeling is telling them. Is it saying it’s time to perform? Is it giving you more energy so you can focus? “Our stress response is an essential and empowering part of being human,” Kambolis says. “The sensations that go with stress can motivate us, protect us and help us perform when the stakes are high.”

BREAK DOWN THEIR PROBLEMS.

Manageable pieces are easier to deal with than one whopper of an issue. If they’re stressed about the number of words on an upcoming spelling test, ask them to choose three words to look over during breakfast each day. If it’s homework that’s getting to them, ask how they might be able to better manage their time so they can get their work done efficiently.

BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL.

Instead of: “I’m so stressed about hosting Christmas this year—I never should have offered to do it,” talk about how you’re going to manage your stress. “I’m really stressed about hosting Christmas. Maybe I should make a list of the things to do to help me focus.” Modelling positive coping skills can help children understand that the stressful situations that come up in their lives can be dealt with, too.
#PARENTPROFILE
We love hearing from other parents about their lives, their go-to family-friendly spots in the city and why they love The 6ix. Check back here each issue for new ideas and recommendations. Want to be featured or know someone who should be? Send us a note at katie@parentsCanada.com

FOR MORE ON ALYSSA’S JOURNEY TO MOTHERHOOD, CHECK OUT OUR FEATURE STORY ON PARENTSCANADA.COM
NAME: Alyssa Garrison
OCCUPATION: Founder of lifestyle brand Random Acts of Pastel
FAMILY: Mylk and Honey, my dogs; Coconut, my cat; and a pastel baby on the way!

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN TORONTO? It was ten years exactly this past August.

DID YOU ALWAYS KNOW YOU WANTED TO LIVE HERE? I never actually did! I had planned on going to school in Montreal, but there was an issue with my exams and I ended up at Ryerson by default. I had never been to Toronto and didn’t know anything about it, but I knew I wanted a fresh start somewhere other than Vancouver! I’m still not totally sure this is the city for me long-term, but I think transplants always feel a bit torn about where to settle.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAMILY’S FAVOURITE SPOTS IN THE CITY? In my experience, Toronto can be a bit tough on this front! I love taking the dogs to walk through High Park, with a stop at The Good Neighbour on the way. The original La Cubana location is a great spot to take kids for brunch, and paired with a walk down Roncesvalles to all the fun shops (places like Early Bird and Worm and Hey Kiddo), it’s a great weekend adventure!
The Toronto Christmas Market has become a staple of the holiday experience in Toronto. Held in the city’s historic Distillery District, this festive indoor/outdoor bazaar offers everything from seasonal shopping and delectable food options, to lovely, cheerful decorations (including a sky-high tree smack in the middle of the event) and a slate of holiday entertainment. But here’s a little secret you might not know: Entrance is free on weekdays, until Friday at 5pm, so play hookie from work and school and enjoy a quieter day with the fam in the marketplace. Can’t make it during the week? Tickets are $6 per person on weekends; kids under 2 are free; torontochristmasmarket.com

‘Tis the season for special gifts, it seems, no matter what you event you celebrate. That’s why we love KolKid and KolWear this time of year. These downtown sister boutiques have been city favours since 1999, with a carefully curated selection of clothing, footwear, baby and kid gear, toys and gifts. We love that they have a section of heirloom items, designed to pass down from generation to generation, alongside more everyday clothing, stuffies, puzzles, puppets and more. Visit KolKid at 674 Queen St. W., and KolWear just down the street at 728 Queen St. W.; kolkid.ca
ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE

HOLIDAY DAY CAMPS

January 2 - 4, 2019

AGES 5-12
YONGE AND EGLINTON

This bustling area of the city is a great place to take the kids for a day of fun. There are parks around every corner, shopping options for the whole family, and no shortage of fab places to grab a snack, a quick bite or a delish meal. Oh, and it’s right on the subway line, so you can make getting there a part of the adventure. Our advice? This winter, plan outdoor activities in the ‘hood before grabbing a hot chocolate or hitting a matinee movie. Finish your day with supper somewhere new.

HATLEY
2648 YONGE STREET
TORONTO, M4P 2J5;
(416) 486-4141
HATLEY.COM

This global clothing line is known for its adorable graphic clothing and outerwear for kids up to age 12 (or size 10), as well as a smaller selection of apparel for women—we’re especially fond of their punny animal illustrations! There are three Hatley boutiques in Toronto, but this is the only one uptown and it’s located perfectly for Yonge and Eg foot traffic. If you’re looking for cute holiday dresses or Christmas morning jammies, grab yourself a latte at one of the local cafes and stroll north to Hatley—you won’t be disappointed.

CIBO
2472 YONGE STREET,
TORONTO, M4P 2H5;
(416) 925-0016
CIBOWINEBAR.COM

You might not think this restaurant has any appeal for little ones, given that it looks a little on the fancy side from the street. But pretty much all kids are into pasta, which is available in spades at this trendy spot, and the atmosphere is cozy and warm—so it’ll work, trust us. Here’s a tip: Take the kids to run around in one of the many parks in the area (try Eglinton Park behind North Toronto Memorial Community Centre) and head to Cibo for an early dinner sitting before it gets crowded. Carbo-load the kids with carbonara, Bolognese or pizza while the adults enjoy a glass of wine and more grown-up options. It’s the perfect date-night spot, too.

BMV BOOKS
2289 YONGE STREET,
TORONTO, M4P 2C6;
(416) 482-6002
BMVBOOKS.COM

It seems when people think of Yonge and Eglinton, they use two landmarks: the subway station and the Indigo (okay, they might throw in the SilverCity, too). But bibliophiles in The 6ix have a little-known secret: Across the street from the popular book and gifting giant sits a small used-and-new bookstore called BMV, which stands for Books, Music and Video, and it’s a book-lover’s dream. Of course the inventory is unpredictable but there’s something fun about wandering the aisles with your kiddos, looking for a hidden gem (the kids’ books, as well as tween and YA titles, are on the second floor, so don’t be discouraged if your brood doesn’t find what they’re looking for on the ground level).
TOP 6:

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

For so many of us, this is the time of year we look for different and festive experiences to share with family and friends. We’ve rounded up some of the city’s most anticipated holiday offerings, to celebrate the season and wind down 2018.

BY STEPHANIE HAWKINS

1. **AURORA WINTER FESTIVAL**
   This winter festival runs from November 9 to December 30 at Ontario Place and offers dazzling light displays, sculptures, ice skating (with skate rentals on site) and more. A visit to Santa’s workshop, amusement park rides and plenty of food truck treats will make your visit to this magical winter wonderland so festively fun.
   [AURORAWINTERFESTIVAL.COM/TORONTO/]

2. **HARBOURFRONT**
   In addition to a picturesque view of the Toronto Islands, Harbourfront is a flurry of activities and events all year round. This November kids can participate in the Swedish Christmas Fair, and try their hands at traditional arts and crafts (they’ll even get to take make a Christmas ornament to take home).
   You can also skate for free on the outdoor Natrel Rink (235 Queens Quay West), or check out many of the nearby weekend festivals.
   [HARBOURFRONTCENTRE.COM]

3. **BLACK CREEK PIONEER VILLAGE**
   Be transported back in time and celebrate Victorian Christmas, enjoy story time with Santa and take a horse-drawn wagon ride (plus they’ll be tons of Christmas caroling and sampling of holiday treats).
   Black Creek Pioneer Village offers various weekend programs throughout the season.
   [BLACKCREEK.CA/CALENDAR]

4. **WINTERFEST AT CANADA’S WONDERLAND**
   Canada’s Wonderland will be transformed into a magical winter wonderland this holiday season. With a 70-foot Christmas tree and so many light and decoration displays, you’ll be in the Christmas spirit the minute you enter the park. Along with singing, holiday performances, ice skating and a tree lighting ceremony with some of your favourite characters, there’s no shortage of things to see and do. Don’t forget to head to the North Pole Post Office so the elves can help your kids send off their letters to Santa, too!
   [CANADASWONDERLAND.COM/PLAY/WINTERFEST]

5. **WINTER WONDERLAND AT FAMOUS PEOPLE PLAYERS**
   Little ones will be entertained by all the stunning costumes, effects and storyline of Famous People Players Winter Wonderland production running from November 10 to January 5. The well-known Black Light Theatre Company offers both lunch and dinner performances. With a variety of meal options to go with your theatre experience, the whole family can be happy while watching this mesmerizing performance!
   [FAMOUSPEOPLEPLAYERS.COM/]

6. **WINTER VILLAGE AT EVERGREEN BRICKWORKS**
   Evergreen Brickworks’s Winter Village is back for another year! Head over to this city favourite for ice skating, delicious food truck snacks, a holiday market, games, roasting s’mores over a fire pit and picking up your sustainably grown Christmas tree. Open weekends from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and during the week between Christmas and New Year’s.
   [EVERGREEN.CA/WHATS-ON/EVENT/EVERGREEN-WINTER-VILLAGE/]
FAMILY FUN THIS WINTER

When the temperature drops, we tend to make like bears and hibernate with our own little cubs. But a dip in the mercury doesn’t have to mean months indoors. There are lots of great winter activities across the GTA to keep everyone busy (just be sure to stay safe—bundle up and pay attention to the forecast. Sometimes it really is just too chilly, and you’re better off catching a movie or hitting a museum). BY STEPHANIE HAWKINS
Whether you’re looking to plan the ultimate family getaway, or an unforgettable weekend with your closest friends, Blue Mountain provides the ideal setting for your winter escape.

SAVE ON WINTER PACKAGES AT BLUEMOUNTAIN.CA
There's no shortage of skating options, from Nathan Phillips Square in the heart of downtown Toronto, to a variety of indoor and outdoor rinks across the region. But if you're looking for a truly unique skating experience, head to Brampton and the skating trail in Chinguacousy Park. This canal-style rink is accessible from a variety of admission points, and signs in the park will help guide you in the right direction (although with over 2000 square metres of ice, it will be hard to miss!).

**Halton Parks Conservation Area**

Halton Parks Conservation Area offers a range of opportunities for families looking to explore the beauty of nature—in the eight areas under the Conservation Halton umbrella, you can try your hand at hiking, snow shoeing and even hosting outdoor birthday parties (for more ideas on hosting a party outdoors this winter, check out page 17). They also have children and youth programs, including the chance to get up-close and personal (and a photo or two!) with birds of prey.

**Toronto Zoo**

No plans for a tropical getaway this winter? No problem! Get a little taste of the heat at the Toronto Zoo, by exploring the TK rainforests and five indoor pavilions. For those who want to enjoy time outside, the Toronto Zoo also has over 10 kilometres of trails that will give you the chance to spot snowy owls, arctic wolves and snow leopards (including young cubs born in May 2018!).

**Maple Syrup Festival at the Kortright Centre for Conservation**

Maple syrup demonstrations, wagon rides, family-friendly activities (including carnival games and a maze!) are just a few of the fun options at the Maple Syrup Festival. Evening tours of the maple sugar bush and a chance to warm up by the campfire are also on offer. The festival runs from March 10 to April 8 and is open from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Can’t make it to the Kortright Centre? No problem! Get your maple syrup fix at the Bruce’s Mill, Terra Cotta or Island Lake conservation areas on weekends or during March Break while the festival runs.

**Aurora Winter Light Exhibition**

From November 23 to March 17, check out Ontario Place’s Aurora Winter Light Exhibition. Ice sculptures and unique art installation pieces make up this unique event. After you’ve explored the sights and lights, head over to the bonfire and warm up with some yummy food and drink.

**Toronto Light Festival**

Head to Toronto’s historical Distillery District for the Toronto Light Festival.
Festival, running from January 18 to March 5. This free event features stunning light displays created by a variety of artists. Check out the festival’s Instagram feed for a sneak peak of what's to come!

INSTAGRAM.COM/TOLIGHTFEST/ TORONTOLIGHTFEST.COM/

TUBING AT LAKERIDGE
If you’re looking for change from your local tobogganing hill, check out Ski Lakeridge—your kids will think you’re the coolest ever when you suggest a day of tubing! You can buy individual tickets ($5.70 + tax) or a pack of 6 ($27.00 + tax) for guaranteed winter fun.

SKI-LAKERIDGE.COM/ TUBING/TUBING-INFO/

CASA LOMA
The beautiful grounds of Casa Loma take on a festive holiday theme for the month of December. Various indoor and outdoor performances, dazzling light displays, day and evening programs, and lots of delish food are on the schedule. Keep an eye on the landmark’s website, as more details will be available soon!

CASALOMA.CA/

Canlan Kids Skating & Hockey
WINTER 18-19
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GET 2019 READY

Print our free, 2019 year-at-a-glance calendar for your fridge or desk. (Want to frame it? You’ll need an 8” x 10” frame.) Don’t forget to add important family milestones, too, as a handy reminder year-round.