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| <b>Topic:</b><br>Festivals in different cultures   |
| <b>Aim:</b><br>To help learners talk about customs for different festivals in their own and other cultures, using Christmas in the UK as an example.   |
| <b>Language aims:</b><br>To develop speaking skills on the topic of customs for festivals in different cultures<br>To develop vocabulary learning skills.  |
| <b>Level:</b><br>B1  |
| <b>Time:</b><br>60–90 minutes (note that some activities are optional)   |
| <b>Materials:</b><br>Cambridge English Christmas <a href="#">vocabulary cards</a><br>Cambridge English YouTube <a href="#">video on vocabulary recording</a><br>Cambridge English Christmas vocabulary crossword: <a href="#">Learner A</a> , <a href="#">Learner B</a> , <a href="#">definitions</a><br>Cambridge English Christmas <a href="#">vocabulary learning activities</a><br><a href="#">Reading</a> text about Christmas in the UK<br>blank cards or slips of paper for writing vocabulary items<br>Planning sheet for homework task. |
| <b>Teacher preparation:</b><br>Cut up Christmas <a href="#">vocabulary cards</a><br>Find photographs or images of different festivals (or Christmas in different cultures, as appropriate)<br>Find photographs of different <a href="#">vocabulary items</a> for Christmas.  |
| <b>Context:</b><br>As this lesson is about festivals in general, it can be used in any context in any country, to talk about different kinds of festivals. Christmas in the UK is used as an example of the kind of customs which belong to one festival. These customs can be compared with Christmas in other countries, or any other kind of festival.  |
| <b>Age:</b><br>Young learners or adults  |
| <b>Vocabulary:</b><br><b>Custom (n):</b> A tradition which people in one culture or country usually follow, or something which people usually do at the time of a festival.<br><b>Festival (n):</b> A special time of year when people in a culture or country celebrate a special event and follow particular customs. Usually this is a happy time of year.<br>See also <a href="#">definitions</a> of the vocabulary used in the reading text and activities on Christmas vocabulary.   |

## Procedure:

### 1. Lead-in and establishing topic

Establish the meanings of *custom* and *festival* by talking about festivals which your learners may be familiar with. This may be Christmas or any other festival. You can use pictures from the internet to help you establish which festival and which customs you are referring to.

Tell your learners that you are going to teach them about Christmas in the UK, then you are going to allow them to write and talk about any festival they would like.

## 2. Brainstorm activity

Divide learners into pairs or small groups, and ask them to think about what they know about Christmas customs in the UK. Ask them to make a list of key vocabulary items, for example, *Christmas tree, Christmas card*.

## 3. Vocabulary activity

Give each pair or group a set of [Cambridge English Christmas Vocabulary Cards](#) and ask them to check if any of the vocabulary items they thought of are on the cards.

Ask learners to put all the remaining cards into three groups: vocabulary items they know, ones they don't know, and ones they are not sure about. Encourage learners to help one another with vocabulary that they find difficult.

Use pictures (which you can find on the internet) to establish and check the meaning of the new vocabulary.

## 4. Video activity (optional)

You can show the learners the [Cambridge English video about recording new vocabulary](#), and ask learners to talk about how they could record this new Christmas vocabulary.

## 5. Vocabulary activity 2

Divide learners into pairs, Learner A and Learner B. Give each student either [Cambridge English Christmas Crossword Learner A](#) or [Learner B](#).

Ask learners to take turns to describe the Christmas vocabulary items. Learners have to guess the items and then complete the gaps in their own crossword. At the end, learners can use the [definitions](#) to help them identify any words which they found difficult.

## 6. Extra activities (optional)

There are other [activities for practising this Christmas vocabulary](#) on the Cambridge English website.

(You can find other general vocabulary activities in Cambridge English Vocabulary Activities on the Cambridge English website.)

## 7. Reading

Give learners the reading text about Christmas in the UK and ask them to read it quickly to see which of the items on the vocabulary list are mentioned.

(Answer key: they are all mentioned, except: *Carols, Party, Card, Snow, Reindeer*.)

Now ask the learners to read the text again and answer the [questions](#) below the reading text.

Answer key:

- to make the house brighter and more cheerful in the cold winter
- on Christmas Day
- presents
- Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day

## 8. Speaking

Now, divide learners into small groups or pairs and ask them to talk about the customs from one festival in their own country.

If you have a group of learners all from the same country, ask each pair or group to think of a different festival.

Ask learners to make a list of vocabulary items about the customs in the festival(s), and to write simple definitions in English. If the names of the customs cannot easily be translated into English, just ask them to put the definitions into English.

Ask them to write each vocabulary item on a card or slip of paper.

Move the learners into larger groups and spread the cards or slips of paper over a desk, or put them on the wall. Ask learners to guess what they mean, which festival they came from, and which learner wrote them.

## 9. Preparation for writing:

To prepare for homework, look at the reading text about Christmas again, and match the [paragraph headings](#) to the sections in the text.

Answer key:

- a) Do people give each other presents? paragraph 3
- b) How do people decorate their houses? paragraph 1
- c) What do people eat and drink during this festival? paragraph 2
- d) When is this festival? paragraph 4

Using the planning sheet for the text about Christmas as an example, ask learners to make notes about a festival in their own country.

Arrange learners into pairs and ask them to show one another their notes and ask their partner more questions about the festival.

## 10. Homework

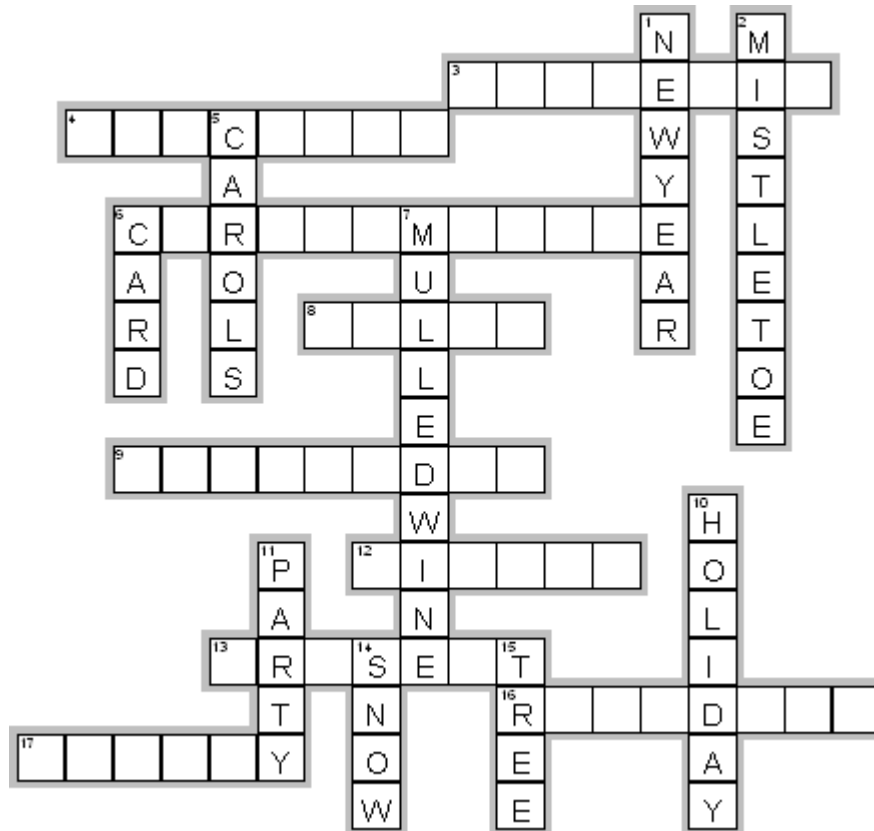
For homework, learners can complete this writing activity and prepare to talk about the festival in the following lessons.

## Christmas vocabulary cards

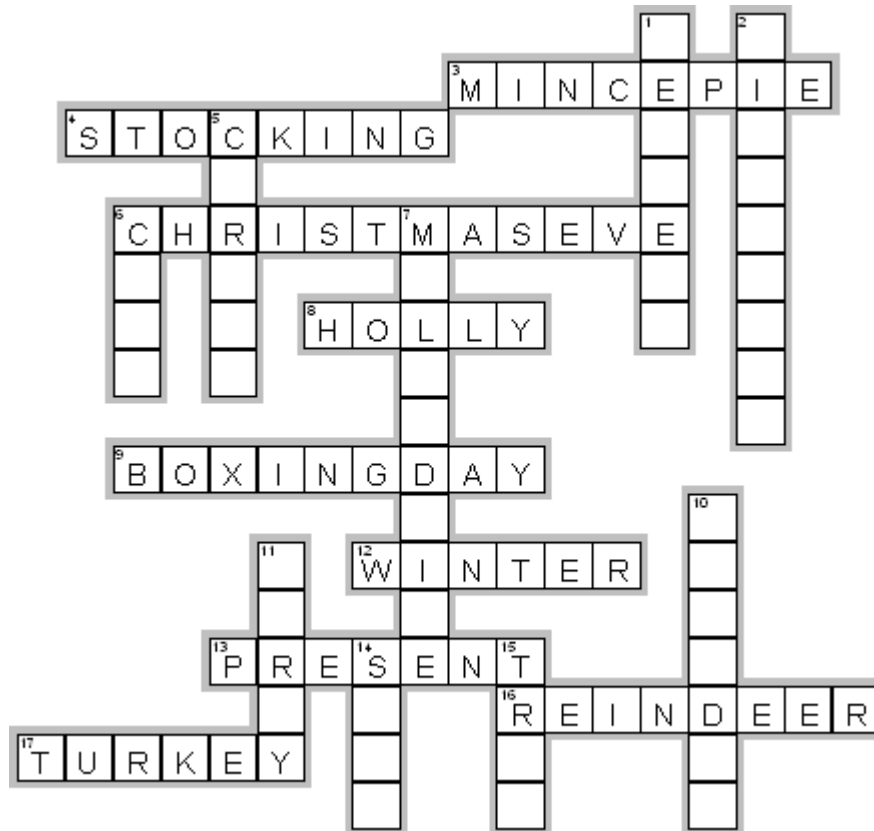
|                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>turkey</b>      | <b>snow</b>          |
| <b>present</b>     | <b>mistletoe</b>     |
| <b>carols</b>      | <b>holly</b>         |
| <b>tree</b>        | <b>card</b>          |
| <b>party</b>       | <b>New Year</b>      |
| <b>stocking</b>    | <b>Boxing Day</b>    |
| <b>mince pie</b>   | <b>holiday</b>       |
| <b>reindeer</b>    | <b>Christmas Eve</b> |
| <b>mulled wine</b> | <b>winter</b>        |

# Cambridge English

## Christmas crossword: Learner A



## Christmas crossword: Learner B



## Christmas vocabulary definitions

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Boxing Day    | The day after Christmas Day  |
| Card          | This has a message written in it and is given from one person to another at Christmas    |
| Carols        | Traditional songs sung at Christmas  |
| Christmas Eve | The day before Christmas   |
| Holiday       | A special time of the year when you do not have to go to work                            |
| Holly         | A green, thorny plant with red berries used to decorate people's homes                   |
| Mince pie     | A traditional sweet pastry filled with fruit   |
| Mistletoe     | Couples traditionally kiss underneath this plant at Christmas                            |
| Mulled wine   | Hot, spiced wine which is drunk at Christmas   |
| New Year      | The celebration between December and January when January 1st begins                     |
| Party         | A meeting of people for a celebration, usually with music, food and dancing              |
| Present       | A gift given from one person to another  |
| Reindeer      | The animals that pull Santa's sleigh   |
| Snow          | Soft pieces of frozen water that fall from the sky when the weather is cold              |
| Stocking      | A large sock into which gifts are placed on Christmas Day                                |
| Tree          | A tall, green thing which is decorated and placed in the house over the Christmas period |
| Turkey        | Large bird traditionally eaten at Christmas  |

## Reading text about Christmas customs in the UK

Many of the Christmas customs in the UK are connected to the winter. People put a Christmas tree, holly and mistletoe in their houses to bring colour and life inside. They also like to put up coloured lights and decorations. This helps to make the house brighter and more cheerful in winter.

There are also many special winter foods which people in the UK eat and drink at Christmas. On Christmas Day they eat turkey at lunchtime, and they eat mince pies, which are small pies full of very sweet fruit. Also they drink hot mulled wine. Sometimes people eat too much at Christmas!

Giving presents is an important custom at Christmas. Families and friends give each other presents in the week before Christmas, or on Christmas Day. Children get very excited about their presents. They have a stocking which they leave by the fireplace on Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>. In the morning they find the stocking is full of presents. Some children believe that Santa Claus fills their stockings with the presents.

The Christmas holiday lasts about a week. Christmas Day, December 25<sup>th</sup>, is the most important day of the holiday. The next day is called Boxing Day and people often visit friends or other family members. Many people have a whole week's holiday, and the last day of the holiday is usually January 1<sup>st</sup>, New Year's Day, when people celebrate the beginning of a new year.

### Questions

- a) Why do people put coloured lights and decorations in their houses at Christmas?
- b) When do people eat turkey?
- c) What do children find in stockings?
- d) Put these days in the correct order: Boxing Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Day.

### Paragraph headings

Match the four paragraph headings to the paragraphs in the text:

- a) Do people give each other presents?
- b) How do people decorate their houses?
- c) What do people eat and drink during this festival?
- d) When is this festival?



## Writing activity plan

Write about the customs in one festival in your country. You can write about Christmas or any other festival.

Think of paragraph headings for three or four paragraphs and make notes about each one, for example:

**How do people decorate their houses?**

holly, mistletoe, lights, colour, Christmas tree

**What do people eat and drink during this festival?**

Too much! Turkey, mulled wine, mince pies

**Do people give each other presents?**

children, stockings

**When is this festival?**

One week from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day