

4

Christmas dilemmas



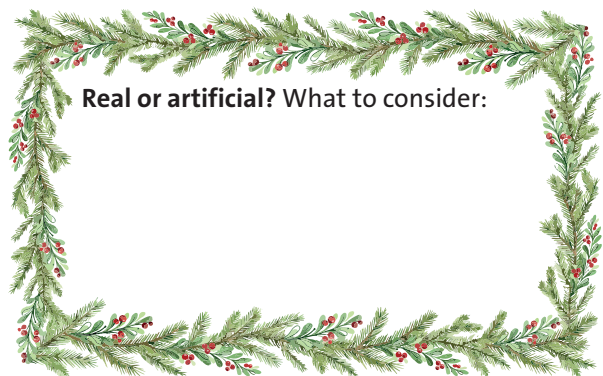
Source: Adobe Stock/Photocreo Bednarek

4 a

Speaking

Warm-up: no Christmas without a tree

Are you team real or artificial tree? Get into groups of four and discuss your preferences. As you do so, write down as many aspects as you can that people should / might consider when making that decision. What are the pros and cons? Then discuss your thoughts in class.



Real or artificial? What to consider:

Source: Adobe Stock/ElenaMedvedeva

4 b

Speaking

If you had to choose ...

... which of these artificial trees – all tested by the British magazine *Good Housekeeping* – would you pick? Discuss your pick in your groups of four.



BEST PRE-DECORATED

7 ft Rocky Ridge Cone & Berry
Time to put up: 5 min 5 sec

BEST CLASSIC

6 ft Balmoral Christmas Tree
Time to put up: 7 min 30 sec

BEST MODERN

6 ft Pre-Lit Black Cashmere Tree
Time to put up: 8 min 6 sec

BEST PRE-LIT

5 ft European Fir Tree
Time to put up: 11 min 26 sec

Source: *Good Housekeeping* (December 2019, Hearst), p. 145

Snap Shot ✨ [O]

4 c

Loneliness at Christmas

Vocabulary

Complete this question-and-answer from *Good Housekeeping* with the verbs provided in the box. Beware that you may need to put them into the appropriate tense to make them work.

to consider • to opt • to lock down • to bring • to spend • to work • to seem •
to handpick • to create

“I don’t want to celebrate alone”



I’m single and childless. I usually _____¹
my Christmas with my sister, but she is going on
a trip abroad this year. Will I _____²
desperate if I ask to join friends in their festivities?



Source: Adobe Stock/
nicolaitonescu/4zevar

Source: *Good Housekeeping* (December 2019, Hearst), p. 127

Emma says ... Don’t panic. All is well ... or it will be. You have something very few people have: choice and freedom about how you spend Christmas Day. First, would you _____³ hosting? I ask this because you may enjoy it and you can _____⁴ the guests. Not everyone is _____⁵ to doing the same thing each year. But if this is not for you or perhaps your home doesn’t quite _____⁶ for this set-up, I think you ought to have no shame in asking a friend you love if you could tag along. One of our best Christmases was when a single uncle, normally elsewhere on the big day, _____⁷ to be at our house. It was a hoot and he _____⁸ a different and brilliant energy to our traditional game of charades.

Choose wisely, as your own enjoyment is also crucial. And offer to help _____⁹ the big day with your pal. If you have a signature dish, bring it, or if there’s a game you love, do introduce it. Please, own your status and your friends will love having you with them.

4 d

Christmas-related problems

Writing

To some people Christmas comes with seemingly unsolvable problems. Get into groups, pick one of the four questions and write an answer. In your reply, say how you would feel, make suggestions on how to deal with the issue and discuss how big the problem really is. Write at least 150 words and then read out your answers in class.

“What am I doing with my life”



When we visit family and friends around Christmas, they always ask, “So, what are your grand plans for your future?” But I don’t have any and so the question makes me feel really down. How do I avoid feeling like I’m not enough when everyone is talking about their lives?

“Her nagging is driving mum mad”



My grandma – my mum’s mother-in-law – comes to stay every year over Christmas and constantly criticises everything my mum does. Mum gets irritated weeks before already. How can I help our family have a more relaxed celebration?



“I want to celebrate Christmas”



My family is Muslim and so am I, but I really like the idea of a Christmas celebration. Is there any way in which I can ask my parents to celebrate Christmas this year?

“I am vegan, but gran ignores it”



Two years ago I switched to a fully vegan diet. But my grandmother, who as usual is hosting Christmas, just ignores this. How can I get her to provide food for me without fighting?

Source: *Good Housekeeping* (December 2019, Hearst), p. 127

Source: Adobe Stock/Salsabila Ariadina/4zevar

4 e Food banks

Lead-in

While everyone who celebrates Christmas likes to boast with a big tree and a delicious array of special foods, for people who struggle with money December 24th and the days that follow are hard. One way to make things easier for them is to go to food banks where they can pick up groceries for free. Food banks have become rather common in the UK. Do you know of any food banks or similar places around you?

4 f Helping out at a food bank

Reading

Read the text a reporter wrote about their first visit to a food bank. Some parts are missing. Choose the correct part (A–K) for each gap (1–8). There are two extra parts that you should not use. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.



Source: Adobe Stock/jalissaa

BE

Banking on human kindness

We all know it is better to give than to receive, and nowhere is that more obvious than in food banks across the UK, which are about to become busier than ever over Christmas. Food banks seem like they belong in Victorian times, but (0) ...

First-hand experience

I confess, I had never set foot in a food bank before spending a day with volunteers in the pretty market town of Hailsham, East Sussex, a few weeks ago. It's housed in a former taxi office (1) ... Food banks are intended to offer support as well as food, so there are a few armchairs to encourage people to linger and have a cup of tea and a chat. Every Christmas, there is a decorated tree in the bay window, with lights to spread festive cheer when it is needed most; last year, the number of people asking for help locally doubled.

The service is run by Julie Coates, who has been involved since 2012, (2) ... A former teaching assistant with two grown-up children, she says it's been an eye-opener: "I think I led a very sheltered life before getting involved with the food bank. It is only when you start speaking to people (3) ... and sometimes by people you wouldn't expect. There are pockets of deprivation in Hailsham, but we also see people with their own homes, (4) ... It's not just certain people; it could be anybody. It could be a neighbour."

How it works

I had the misconception that the same people

used food banks week in week out. But, in fact, the average number of visits from someone using a food bank is just two per year. All the food at the bank is dry and long lasting: pasta, rice, cereal, tinned meat, fish and fruit. The food bank worked with nutritionists to decide what to offer. All products are donated by local people, largely through collection points at supermarkets, (5) ... When supplies run low in the neatly kept warehouse, Julie puts out an appeal on Facebook, and donations come tumbling in.

A sobering truth

It's hard not to be moved by the stories of the people – mostly mothers with young children – who visit the Hailsham bank when I am there. Among them is Amy, 32, who is near the end of her tether. Her husband walked out a month ago and, (6) ... she admitted she needed help to feed her children. Catherine, a 23-year-old with two young children, had no money last December and was at the food bank a few days before Christmas. She left with carrier bags full of food: all the usual supplies that are handed out, plus some festive goodies that all food banks gather to make sure no one misses out. "We wouldn't have had a Christmas without the help," says Catherine. "It was a godsend. I had a Christmas pudding, chocolate, snacks. It made such a difference to how I felt (7) ..."

Donations spike at this time of year: "We have people coming in with trolleys of shopping", says Julie. "We often have donations from people who have been helped by the food bank in the past (8) ..."

Source: Adobe Stock/Atikah



bay window: a window space projecting outward from the main walls of a building to be at the end of one's tether: to have no strength left

Source: Good Housekeeping (December 2019, Hearst), p. 74–76

Test format
Multiple matching

- A | that has been made as welcoming as possible
- B | when people often have no option but to either feed their families or heat their homes
- C | when it was set up by churches in the town
- D | that you realise it's much more needed than you'd think
- E | these days people are much more empathetic
- F | after weeks of struggling
- G | in fact, are very much part of modern life
- H | while monetary donations help towards running costs
- I | because to know people care is a wonderful feeling
- J | who are working but have had a setback, through a debt or illness
- K | and want to give back when they are able to

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
G								

4 g

What resonates most with you?

Speaking

Read the entire text again on your own and mark the one sentence that makes the biggest impression on you. Then exchange in groups of five which sentence you picked and explain why you chose this part of the text.

4 h

F is for ...

Follow-up

Make a summary of the article you've just read by picking one word / phrase that begins with each of the letters in *food bank*. Choose them in such a way that they overall give a good overview of the article.

F
O
O
D
B
A
N
K

Source: Adobe Stock/MicroOne

4 i

Ending an article

Writing

Write an ending to the article on food banks in 4 f. Remember that the article very directly uses the 1st person singular, so you should do so too in your ending. Try to express the effect this visit to the food bank has had on you, what message you take away from it or which feeling it has awoken in you. Also think about which take-home-message you want to share with the readers.

Snap Shot ✨ [O]

4 j Distributing food in school

Speaking

Your school has collected non-perishable food items for students in need. The next step is to decide on how to distribute the collected food. Get into groups of four and discuss how this should be done. The ideas so far are:

- » set up a table with a sign saying “Take what you need”
- » three pre-packed bags per class, students decide who takes them home
- » teachers nominate families most in need, the food is shared amongst them
- » send a letter to all parents asking them to email to the headmaster if they want a share
- » all food is put into the gym, the 30 parents with the lowest income can come and choose



Source: Adobe Stock/
Maria Shchipakina

4 k Read for the underlined words

Vocabulary

Read the text below aiming to find out what the underlined words mean. Write down synonyms for as many of them as you can in the margin.

4 l Rules for Christmas prezies

Reading

Read the text about how a *Good Housekeeping* columnist challenged her family at Christmas. Answer the questions (1–8) using a maximum of four words. Write your answers in the spaces provided. The first one (0) has been done for you.

BE

The best gifts are made with love & wine corks

I don't like Christmas, I love it. I am one of those annoying people who become giddy with excitement at the thought of a decorated tree, a plate of mince pies and an elf costume (I have my own), because I love everything about the yuletide season. Absolutely everything. Well, apart from the one thing that dampens the joy like a soggy Brussel sprout.

You might think me a grinch, but I'm happy to admit that I get gratuitously grumpy about presents, both the giving and receiving of them. I'm not stingy with money, far from it, and my dislike doesn't come from a place of frugality. The source of my hatred comes from the waste involved in the exchange of festive gifts. And I don't just mean the excessive amounts of wrapping paper and gift bags; I mean horrific presents that no one wants.

Every Boxing Day I find myself filling bags with stuff nobody wants and sighing at the uselessness of buying meaningless things for each

other that nobody really wanted just because it's “the done thing”.

So last year, I decided things were going to change. I issued a declaration to the family that if they were going to come to my house for Christmas they had to abide by one simple rule: any gifts had to be home-made and come without any packaging. Initially no one responded and

I wondered if maybe I'd gone too far in trying to change my traditional family's values. Slowly but surely the responses started trickling in. They were all on board and ready to get going. But, despite the positivity, part of me still expected my loved ones to forget and end up panic-buying me socks and shower gel as per usual. I've never been more delighted to be wrong in my life.

My mum made me a cookbook from my gran's handwritten recipes. Her classic post-war menu included a recipe for Italian Mince (minced meat, one can of condensed tomato soup, one can of condensed mushroom soup, pasta; the pasta is what makes it Italian). Who needs a



to abide:

soggy:

gratuitously:

frugality:

to be delighted:

Boxing Day:
26th of
December,
a bank holiday
in the UK

30

35

40

45

50

Source: Adobe Stock/Ruth Black
Source: Adobe Stock/Mauro Rodrigues/medwedja

Michelin star when you have Campbell's soup to make things Mediterranean?

55 My four-year-old nephew made me a plate. I suspect he had help, although the design is clearly all his. It's like something a person on hallucinogenic drugs would create, a combination of yellow, orange and magenta. It's so garish: 60 garish but, every morning when I butter my toast on it, I'm reminded of him.

The most surprising gift was from my brother. He's a lovely man but not particularly expressive and I assumed that he thought my plan to produce: 65 to be stupid. But, with some fanfare, he produced what he had made for me. He had created a napkin holder from wine corks arranged in a triangular pile, like a pyramid sliced in half with a gap of around an inch between the two parts. It was superglued onto what appeared to be a beer mat and was unevenly painted with varnish. It was beautiful! 70

It sounds silly but I was quite emotional that my big brother would spend time making something that he was so proud of. And that 75 my whole family embraced the idea of making things for each other. In fact, it turned out that they all really enjoyed planning gifts and then creating them.

As my brother was leaving, he took one last look at his masterpiece and revealed that, while he had enjoyed making it for me, it cost him more than £ 200. That's how much wine he'd drunk to get the corks. And every time he opened a bottle and his wife raised an eyebrow, he was able to say it was for my Christmas present. I think I might get another one this year. And next year. And 80 85 90 the year after that. I think he's enjoying home-made presents as much as I am.



Source: Adobe Stock/Nik_Merkulov

garish:
to produce:
varnish:

**Test format
Note form**

0	What Christmas item does the author possess?	an elf costume
1	What exactly does the author not enjoy about Christmas?	
2	Which criteria did the author set for presents?	
3	What made her think she had pushed her family too far?	
4	What did the columnist think her family would do?	
5	Which ingredient in the recipe is jokingly said to replace an excellent cook?	
6	How does she feel about her nephew's present? (Give <u>one</u> answer.)	
7	Which materials did her brother use for the gift?	
8	Why did her brother enjoy making the napkin holder?	

Source: Good Housekeeping (December 2019, Hearst), p. 41

4 m

Follow-up

Hand-made gifts only

What if your family were to follow the rule of "home-made only"? Take a few minutes to think about this and prepare to talk about this imaginary situation for at least two minutes without stopping. Consider questions such as: Who would be upset? What would you get and what would you give? What effect do you think this would have on the celebration? Who would be the most likely person to break the rule and why / how would they break the rule? Are there similar rules that your family is likely to introduce?



Source: Adobe Stock/ Good Studio