

**JOY  
MAKER**

**R N I B**

See Christmas  
differently

# The Joy Makers' Guide to Christmas

How you can make Christmas accessible  
for children with vision impairment





# Introduction



**Christmas is sharing, Christmas is caring. Christmas is enjoying the fun jumpers your family are wearing.**

Christmas is many things, but, above all, Christmas is the festive joy you can only feel this time of year.

As Joy Makers, we believe we can help everyone share that festive feeling, so we've come together – with the help of a few of RNIB's friends – to create this guide; a treasure trove of accessible activities that everyone can take part in.

Whether you're looking for fun inside or outside the home, accessible gifts and toys or want to enjoy your seasonal trip to the pantomime, this guide has your Christmas covered. We hope you enjoy bringing some of its ideas to life, as much as we've enjoyed coming up with them. Not only that, many of these activities – from baking to decoration-making – are great bonding opportunities, allowing families to explore many different sensory experiences together.

A special thank you to all the parents, carers and young people who shared suggestions, tips and their experiences, which are quoted and shared throughout this guide.



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# Christmas activities

## – Inside

For those shorter days and colder nights, we have a selection of accessible activities and experiences to enjoy bringing more of the joy of Christmas into your home. In this section you will find activities appropriate for children with vision impairment, including guides for festive decorations with a difference and some special Christmas treats.



A wooden cutting board with several orange peels. One peel is shaped into a large, irregular loop. Another peel is shaped into a five-pointed star. A pine branch is visible in the top right corner. A red banner is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Make festive decorations

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## Citrus peel decorations

Some believe the tradition of putting oranges in a Christmas stocking started when Saint Nicholas (or Santa Claus, as we now know him) hid bags of gold in the stockings of a family who had fallen on hard times.

Not only has the scent of oranges long been associated with Christmas, this activity will fill your home with a fresh, citrusy smell all through the festive period.

### What you will need:

- A selection of citrus fruits (lemons, limes, oranges)
- Small metal cookie-cutters (star shapes work brilliantly here)
- A piece of brightly-coloured ribbon, like that used for gift wrap

## How to make sensory festive decorations:

1. Carefully peel your fruit. The bigger the pieces, the easier it will be to cut the shapes.
2. Position the cookie-cutter on some peel, checking that it fits fully within the piece you're using. Depending on the dryness of the fruit, you may find it's easier to cut from the inside layer, rather than from the more slippery outer surface of the peel.
3. Press down firmly, using the palm of your hand, until you feel the cutter touch the surface beneath. Carefully remove the shape from the cutter.
4. Use a skewer, or the tip of some scissors, to pierce a hole in the centre of your shape (adults may want to do this part).
5. You can leave the shapes to dry for a couple of days or move straight on to the next step.



6. Thread the shapes onto your ribbon. If the holes you made have shrunk during the drying process, use the tip of a pencil to gently prise these open again.
7. Tie a knot at each end of the ribbon – or join the ends together to make a circle – and spread your shapes out evenly along it.
8. Now find somewhere to hang your decoration (it will look great on a Christmas tree!).

As an alternative, you could instead fill a small organza bag (easily bought online) with cinnamon sticks, cloves and star anise and hang this on your tree or from the mantelpiece.

9. And now you have Christmas decorations that smell as good as they look!
10. (Remember, small parts can be a choking hazard for some children.)



Christmas is filled with visual delights – Christmas trees, decorations, ornately-wrapped gifts. A child with vision impairment can also find joy in the variety of fragrances associated with the season. Next time you are near a real Christmas tree, encourage your child to identify the citrusy, pine smell that is so unique to this time of year.

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## Paper chains

Paper chains are a traditional decoration with the very modern advantage of being good for the environment! Recycle magazines, newspaper, leftover Christmas wrap or any other paper-based material to create this lovely addition to your decorations box. Stored carefully, they should last for a few Christmases too.

### What you will need

- Paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Sequins or other reflective embellishments (optional)

### How to make your festive paper chain

1. Cut the paper into equal strips. The size depends on how large you want the loops on your paper chain. Try 5cm x 20cm strips but adapt to your child's preference. To help your child independently cut the shapes, draw thick or dark lines for them to follow or let them cut around a card template attached to the paper with Blu Tack.
2. If you want your paper chains to have more visual appeal, add sparkly decorations at this stage. Avoid anything that will add too much weight to each strip or that will get in the way of them being fastened together.
3. Bend the first piece of paper into a circle, overlapping the ends slightly and fasten together using glue or tape.
4. Repeat, folding each piece of paper through the last to create a linked chain.



**"We have bought 'make your own decorations packs' in the past and these are pretty accessible, but my daughter loved how simple it was to make paper chains."**

Member of RNIB's online community

Paper chains, hung in loops from the ceiling or draped across the tree, make a distinctive 'rustling' sound when disturbed, such as when someone walks by or if a door opens or closes.

Encourage your child to pick out the different sounds in your home at Christmas and help them experience the joy that is often found in the smallest of details. (Always ensure decorations are safely fastened and kept away from sources of heat.)



# Enjoyable Christmas treats



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## Bake gingerbread stars



**"I love baking cookies with my kids. Letting them use cookie cutters is a great way of teaching Christmas shapes."**

**Member of RNIB's online community**

Very distinctive ingredients are used to make gingerbread. Baking these cookies will fill your home with the warm, spicy smell so often associated with Christmas.

Baking with your child is a great bonding opportunity as it allows you both to explore many different sensory experiences together. As well as being a tasty treat, these gingerbread stars can also be made into unique tree decorations.

### **What you will need:**

- 100g salted butter
- 3 tbsp golden syrup
- 100g dark muscovado sugar
- ½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tbsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 225g plain flour
- Star shaped cookie cutter(s)



## To decorate (optional)

- 50g icing sugar (or use ready-made piping tubes)

## How to make gingerbread stars

1. Heat the butter, syrup and sugar together in a small pan until melted, stirring occasionally. Set aside to cool slightly.
2. Mix the bicarbonate of soda, ginger, cinnamon and flour in a large bowl. Take a moment to explore the way the different spices smell and how this changes when they are added to other ingredients.
3. Pour in the buttery syrup mixture and stir to combine, then use your hands to bring together to form a dough. Add up to 1 tbsp of milk to combine if needed. Some children might need time to get used to sticky textures in baking. If they are not comfortable with this part, try putting their hands on top of yours so they get a sense of the process involved in moulding the dough.
4. Put the dough on a sheet of baking parchment, shape into a rectangle, and lay another sheet of parchment on top of it. Roll the dough out to a thickness of around 0.5 cm. Transfer to a baking sheet to keep it flat, leaving the parchment in place, then chill in the fridge for an hour.
5. Heat the oven to 190C/170C fan/gas 5 and line a large baking sheet with more baking parchment. Remove the dough from the fridge and cut out shapes using a star-shaped cookie cutter.

**TIP:** If you have different sized cookie cutters, use these to remove the centre of some larger cookies. The smaller cookies make bite-sized treats whilst the larger ones can be hung from the Christmas tree using ribbon.

6. Spread the shapes on the lined baking sheet and bake for 10-12 mins (depending on the size of the cookies, they might need a few minutes more or less than this). Leave to cool completely on the baking sheet.
7. Meanwhile, mix the icing sugar with 1-2 tbsp water – you'll want to create a consistency that's thick and pipeable – not too thin or it will run! Decorate the cooled biscuits with the icing using a piping bag with a thin nozzle. Alternatively, use ready-made piping tubes that can be found in the baking section of most shops.

(Adapted from a recipe at BBC good food  
[www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/ultimate-easy-gingerbread](http://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/ultimate-easy-gingerbread))



**“Go through the spice cupboard together. Open jars and smell the contents. This will get messy but when we did it, it was a lot of fun!”**

**Member of RNIB's online community**

# Christmas crafts and fun



## Create accessible Advent calendars

Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “arrival” or “coming” and, in Christian traditions, it refers to the four-week period leading up to Christmas Day.

Finding the numbers on Advent calendars can be tricky because they are generally in small print on a ‘busy’ background, so here are a few suggestions to help your child locate their treat each day:

1. Use a braille labeller, puffy paint or tactile stickers to attach numbers to a shop-bought Advent calendar.
2. Purchase a reusable ‘fill your own’ Advent calendar. Not only do these have the advantage of lasting for several years and allowing you to choose your own treats, but, if you find one with drawers that are the same shape and size, you can rearrange these so that the days are organised sequentially. Each day, your child simply has to count along to reach the number they are looking for.
3. If you have time, you could make your own tactile Advent calendar, adapted to the needs of your child. Paths to Literacy give an example of how to do this here: [www.pathstoliteracy.org/tactile-advent-calendar/](http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/tactile-advent-calendar/)
4. Some retailers sell braille advent calendars, but stock and availability may be limited. <https://cardsinbraille.co.uk/product-category/braille-advent-calendars/>

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## Make some Christmas mischief with Elf on the Shelf

Elf on the Shelf has become a popular Christmas tradition for many families – every morning the elf can be found in a new place in the home. It's easy to see where the appeal lies – for children at least!

How you play Elf on the Shelf may vary from other families, but the feeling of mischievous joy is shared by all who participate.

Inspired by Carol Aebersold's picture book, *The Elf on the Shelf: A Christmas Tradition*, the game begins when Santa sends a scout elf into your home to hide and observe your family, reporting back to the North Pole on your behaviour so Santa can update his naughty or nice list accordingly. While watching, the elf can orchestrate Christmas pranks to spread mischief, and must be found in several hiding spots around your home by your children.



**"I don't have time for elaborate daily scene setting, so our elves will bring words each day, which will create a note from Santa. This is easy to adapt to use with braille too for our five-year-old severely sight-impaired daughter."**

Member of RNIB's online community



One of the 'rules' that often applies to this mischievous visitor from the North Pole is that children are not allowed to touch the elf, but this can be a problem for those who rely on tactile feedback and exploration.

Just remember, as with any Christmas tradition, you can adapt this so that it works for your family.



**"Our elf came with a note stating that he may be touched and won't lose his magic."**

Member of RNIB's online community

A fun way to help your elf really fit in with your family is to give them glasses, or even a cane of their own. A quick search on Etsy will help you locate custom-made canes for dolls, or you can make your own with a few simple household items.

These cheeky chaps are intent on creating havoc and it's your child's job to discover what mischief they have been up to overnight. Adding sensory elements so that your child can locate the elf each morning will help.

- You could create a 'sensory mat' for your child to follow to take them to the elf's location – a roll of bubble wrap works brilliantly!
- Try a voice recorder, so your elf can speak (or sing) clues to his or her whereabouts. You might want to also use a voice changer, to avoid giving the game away!



### **Prank ideas for your elf**

Thinking of different pranks that the elf can play is tricky enough, without having to also worry about making these accessible for a child with vision impairment.

Luckily, our friends at VICTA, a national charity which supports children with vision impairment, young adults with sight loss and their families, have already curated a brilliant set of ideas here: <https://bit.ly/3FHWogy>

# Christmas activities

## – Outside

For the adventurers that love wrapping up warm and finding their fun outside their home, we've compiled a collection of accessible activities for children with vision impairment to enjoy. Just remember, if you start to feel too cold, take a break inside to warm up before you continue.

**"I used to love driving around our town with my parents to see all the lights at Christmas. I particularly liked the yellow and blue lights."**  
Member of RNIB's online community



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## Build Swedish snow lanterns

If you don't have time – or enough snow – to build a snowman, try making a traditional snow lantern (in Swedish: Snölykta) which celebrates light as a welcoming and nurturing force.

### What you will need:

- Snow
- Tealights (or use battery-operated ones)

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### How to make Swedish snow lanterns:

1. Locate a flat area outside and start making your snowballs. Keep them uniform in size and pack them well.
2. The more snowballs you have, the higher you can build!
3. Place your first layer of snowballs in a circle, creating a ring approximately 30-40cm in diameter.
4. Continue to build the structure, adding one layer after another, gradually decreasing the width each time. Make sure each snowball is securely in place but don't press too hard or your tower will collapse!
5. When you have a gap just big enough to fit your hand through, carefully place a tea light in the middle of the structure at the base.
6. Light your tea light (or switch it on, if battery-operated) before adding the final few snowballs to the top of the pile.

Once lit, snow lanterns emit a warm, welcoming glow that will spread joy and beauty for as long as the light inside remains. After the efforts of building, why not reward your child with a mug of steaming hot chocolate while everyone takes a moment to enjoy the calm, uplifting feeling of a beautiful job well done.





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## Go sledging

Joining in winter sports helps children develop confidence, through overcoming a fear, or simply because it allows them the opportunity to be involved in a more 'extreme' activity.

Sledging is a great activity that – when managed carefully – lets children with vision impairment experience the joyous feeling of moving at speed and the adrenalin rush it brings.



### Sledging top tips

Before you head out with your sledges, consider things that might affect your child's ability to enjoy the activity:

- Extremes in lighting, for example the effect of bright sunshine reflecting off snowy surfaces.
- The increased risk of slips, falls and collisions.
- The impact of the noise and distraction from other people.

## With a bit of planning ahead, most risks can be managed:

- Wear peaked hats or dark glasses to reduce glare.
- Check everyone has good, grippy footwear and provide a hand to steady them on the ice if needed.
- Look for a quiet spot, away from crowds.

When you and your child are happy with the location and environment, start slowly, perhaps on a level area, with you pulling them along on the sledge. Give your child time to find their balance and adjust their body to the different speeds, inclines and bumps they encounter.

Sometimes your child may experience a fall, but if you can maintain a positive and calm attitude, it makes a big difference to how your child may react.

Learning to fall safely is a skill that can be developed and practising it in a fun way helps. Use a simple phrase like 'bumper hands' so your child knows to put their hands in front of them – as though holding a beach ball – to make a protective arc.

As your child develops confidence, you can introduce different elements of speed and challenge to this activity. Try a steeper incline and gradually increase the speed at which the sledge moves.

If you have been sharing the sledge, see if they want to try going solo, perhaps with you walking or running alongside at first. Give plenty of verbal directions and make use of the guide ropes at the front of the sledge until you feel the time is right to let them fly freely.



For more accessible activities that help bring the joy of different cultural festivals and celebrations to families of children with vision impairment, visit [www.rnib.org.uk/celebrations](http://www.rnib.org.uk/celebrations).





# Christmas presents

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## Finding the right toy

Some of the greatest joy children experience at Christmastime is discovering all of the presents Santa has delivered. Finding the right toys that are accessible for children with vision impairment can be a challenge – but don't worry – we've gathered some tips and some suggestions to get you started.

### When choosing toys look out for:

- Good colour and tone contrast
- Lettering that is bold and clear
- Good reflection of light or fluorescent elements
- Toys which encourage children to use their eyes to follow an object
- Toys which encourage development of hand-eye co-ordination and/or fine motor control, using small finger movements
- Interesting textures and tactile variety – some toys which look like they offer different textures, actually feel similar, like felt and velvet – test for yourself to see if the textures really feel different
- A scented feature

- Switches that are recognisable by touch such as on or off and click when operated
- Toys which encourage awareness of cause and effect through touch – “when I press here, something happens”
- Toys which make a sound or other cue to an action having occurred
- Equipment and toys which encourage physical movement, running or jumping, or reaching and stretching for children with more complex needs



For more advice on choosing toys and the benefits of play, download our **Let's Play guide** ([rnib.org.uk/play](http://rnib.org.uk/play)).



# Gift ideas and recommendations

Here's a selection of great toy and gift ideas, recommended by other parents and our friends at Toylikeme. ([www.toylikeme.org](http://www.toylikeme.org))

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## Toniebox

<https://tonies.com/en-gb/tonieboxes/>



The Toniebox is an audio storytelling system that's ideal for children with vision impairment.

**"My son loves his Toniebox! It's great for easy manipulation, everything is pretty much tactile and it's sturdy."**  
Member of RNIB's online community

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## Hot Wheels Braille Racer

Currently only available in the UK through limited distributors such as Ebay and Amazon but a great toy for any Hot Wheels enthusiasts.



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## Smart Ball Counter Football or Speed Football

[www.goldenbeartoy.com](http://www.goldenbeartoy.com)



For children who love the beautiful game and want to develop their skills, these footballs have lights and sounds and can count your tricks as you practise.

## RukusFX Music Mixer

[bit.ly/RukusFXMusicMixer](http://bit.ly/RukusFXMusicMixer)



With its handheld motion control and light up effect, RukusFX is the perfect interactive electronic device for any music lovers. This toy has great appeal for any child with a vision impairment who wants to create their own unique sound.

## Osmo Creative Starter Kit

[bit.ly/OsmoCreativeStarterKit](http://bit.ly/OsmoCreativeStarterKit)

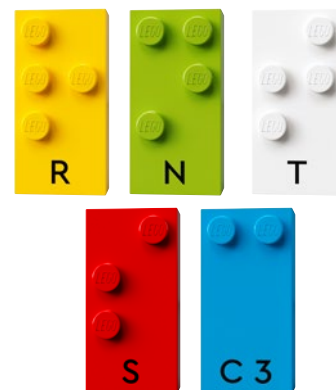
Osmo projects objects in the real world onto the screen of an iPad or Fire tablet which can be brought to life using animation.



## LEGO Braille Bricks

<https://legobraillebricks.com>

LEGO® Braille Bricks is a playful tool to teach braille to children with vision impairment. Now available for families to purchase.



**"Make sure there are batteries already installed. Open the package and make sure everything is accessible so they don't have to wait to get the gift – those rubber bands and plastic fasteners can cause a meltdown!"**

Member of RNIB's online community

## Melissa and Doug Latches Board

<https://melissaanddoug.co.uk/product/latches-board/>

Undo a lock or latch, swing open the numbered door and build fine motor skills while learning about colours, numbers, animals and more!





## Magformers

<https://magformers.co.uk/>

Tough, tactile and offering a range of builds for different ages and stages, these magnetic shapes encourage STEM learning through creative construction.

## Orchard toys Giant Road Jigsaw

[bit.ly/OrchardToysGiantRdJigsaw](http://bit.ly/OrchardToysGiantRdJigsaw)

This large floor jigsaw features wheelchair and mobility scooter users, along with a man and his guide dog strolling to work.



## Tactile Connect 4

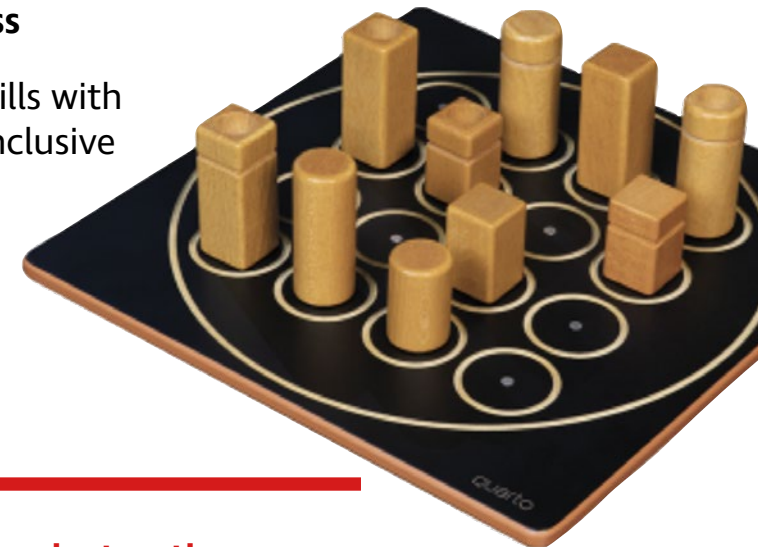
[rnib.in/TactileConnect4](http://rnib.in/TactileConnect4)

A modified version of this family favourite where the coloured counters are distinctly different so you'll always know which counters are yours.

## Quarto Access strategy game

[rnib.in/QuartoAccess](http://rnib.in/QuartoAccess)

Test your strategy skills with this accessible and inclusive version of Quarto. It comes with two eye masks so that sighted and non-sighted players can join in.



**"You can emboss instructions beforehand, so they come with the set, or download them on to a cute flash drive to give alongside the gift."**

Member of RNIB's online community

# Stocking fillers and low-cost gifts



## Gifts for children with vision impairment

Try to choose toys and gifts that are bright, noisy and have good tactile quality. Here are some fun ideas to consider:

Instead of standard pens, pencils and stationery, pop in scented versions of these popular items. Many retailers now stock a wide range of scented items including key rings, notebooks, pencil cases and more.

Avoid plastic models or toys that come with instructions written in small print, but anything with tactile appeal is great: squeezy, squishy toys (especially scented versions), slime and fidget cubes are all still popular and appeal to most children.

Musical or sound toys are ideal: fill their stocking with whistles, bells, voice changers and other noisy, fun stuff!

### Gift ideas

- Uno Braille ([rnib.in/UnoBraille](http://rnib.in/UnoBraille))
- Hama Beads ([www.hamabeads.com](http://www.hamabeads.com))
- Light up gloves ([bit.ly/LightUpGloves-Search](http://bit.ly/LightUpGloves-Search))
- Whoopee cushion ([bit.ly/WhoopeeCushions](http://bit.ly/WhoopeeCushions))
- Disco lights ([bit.ly/DiscoLights4Kids](http://bit.ly/DiscoLights4Kids))
- Play Doh or magnetic putty ([bit.ly/PlayDohSearch](http://bit.ly/PlayDohSearch) or [bit.ly/MagneticPuttySearch](http://bit.ly/MagneticPuttySearch))
- Giant or scented bubbles ([bit.ly/GiantBubblesSearch](http://bit.ly/GiantBubblesSearch))



## Christmas experiences

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### Shows and pantomimes

What could be more joyous than hearing your children scream: “He’s behind you!” during a festive pantomime? We’ve heard from parents that accessible Christmas shows can be hard to find – so we’ve shared some adaptations to consider which can help your child get the most joy out of the experience.



**“For those ‘Meet Father Christmas’ type experiences, let them know in advance that your child can’t see and suggest appropriate gifts. If that can’t happen, take something suitable wrapped up that you can sneak them to give to your child.”**

**Member of RNIB’s online community**

Many excellent organisations are able to offer fun and meaningful experiences for children and young people and some may already have experience of working with children with a vision impairment. If you're not sure whether an event will be suitable for your child's specific needs, here are some key questions to ask:

- Have the staff any experience of working with children with vision impairment? What training have they had and how recently? RNIB can support organisations that wish to undertake visual awareness training.
- Can you do a pre-visit to check out the location of the event? If you are concerned about specific issues or potential hazards, how will they make reasonable adjustments to accommodate your child's needs?



## Your rights

Under the terms of the Equality Act 2010 (Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland) a service provider is not allowed to discriminate against someone because of his or her disability or other "protected characteristic". For disabled people, the Equality Act also says that service providers may have to make "reasonable adjustments". For more information you can download an 'Equality Act Toolkit' from [rnib.org.uk/campaigning/campaign-resources](https://www.rnib.org.uk/campaigning/campaign-resources)





# Audio description, relaxed performances and touch tours

So that your child can really experience the joy of a live performance, check first to see if the theatre has audio description, offers relaxed performances or touch tours.

## What these terms mean

Audio description (AD) is additional commentary that explains what's happening on a stage or on screen. AD describes body language, expressions and movements, making the action and story clear through sound.

A relaxed performance is where some standard theatre 'rules' are relaxed. These performances are ideal for people with learning disabilities or autism, or anyone who would benefit from a more relaxed environment. A relaxed performance may keep lighting on in the auditorium or reduce the volume of on-stage noises and music.

Touch tours give people who are visually impaired the opportunity to touch parts of the set and any major pieces of scenery, props and costumes. This is to help audience members immerse themselves in the imaginary world presented on stage.

## What to do to prepare for your visit

Check whether the performance you want to see has any of these adaptations. It's worth talking to your child about audio description before you go. Sometimes children don't like to feel like they are the only ones using specialist equipment. One option, if the theatre has enough headsets, is to encourage your whole group to try them out. Sharing in your child's experience of listening to audio description will help them feel truly included and, when done well, good audio description is guaranteed to improve anyone's experience of a performance.

Even if a child has relatively good vision for everyday activities, the low lighting in theatres might mean they need a bit of extra support. Take into account how your child uses their vision when choosing seats – it may be that they will see better on one side of the auditorium than the other, for example – but aim to stay close to the exits so that you don't have to walk too far in the dark to find your seat (and so that any trips to the toilet during the performance are kept as simple as possible). Minimise the number of obstacles that you will have to negotiate, such as stairs or other people on your row, and encourage your child to use mobility aids, such as their cane, to find their way around the theatre.

A trip to the theatre is guaranteed to expose children to a range of sensory experiences and some may find the environment overwhelming. It's worth remembering that, for a child with vision impairment, this sensory overload might be something that they need help to manage. Noise reducing headphones can make children with additional needs feel more comfortable – but bear in mind how these will work if you want to access audio description. It's also worth checking with your local theatre whether they offer relaxed performances where the lighting is left on, and the sound turned down.



**“Over the years I have dressed as Santa for Christmas parties. During lockdown we drove round and delivered presents to children and did personal video messages over email, Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp”**

**Mark, Volunteer at Sight Concern Bedfordshire**

## More information about accessible performances

For information about shows that offer audio description and touch tours visit at [vocaleyeyes.co.uk](http://vocaleyeyes.co.uk)  
See whats on at Christmas: [bit.ly/WhatsOnAtXmas](https://bit.ly/WhatsOnAtXmas)

Some local societies and groups provide trips for families of children and young people with vision impairment.



Contact [cypf@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cypf@rnib.org.uk) to find out about organisations and charities in your local area.

### Help with the cost of activities



RNIB is an official distributor of Max Cards, the UK's largest activity discount card. Families can use their Max Card at venues across the UK to get free and discounted entry. Visit <https://mymaxcard.co.uk/> for information about the scheme then contact [cypf@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cypf@rnib.org.uk) to apply for a card.



Visit [www.victa.org.uk/our-services/activity-calendar/](http://www.victa.org.uk/our-services/activity-calendar/) for details of a range of ticket offers for families of children and young people at Christmas and all year round.



The Powell Family Foundation provides grants to help children and young people with vision impairment reach their full potential. (<https://tpff.org.uk/application/>)

# How we celebrate Christmas

Christmas is all about dressing up, games and food for Leonie Roberts and her family. Leonie, aged 41, has worked in money exchange and management and is mum to Torishae (11) and Peter (10); Leonie has macular degeneration and has intercranial hypertension.

So they can enjoy their time at Christmas together, games are accessible.



## What's your favourite Christmas tradition to enjoy as a family and why?

Leonie: Our favourite family Christmas tradition is gathering around to play games and indulge in a wonderful Christmas spread. It's a special time for the four of us, we all have busy lives, but we love making Christmas Day just about the four of us. We absolutely love playing games and we look for ones that are accessible that we can all take part, and we love the quality time spent together.

## What are your favourite Christmas treats?

Our favourite Christmas treats include the classic wafer-thin salmon slices on blinis, a yearly tradition that we all love. We also have loads of fun in the tradition of opening crackers and putting on the festive hats. Chocolate – Of course, a big box of Quality Street that we all dive into.

## What's your favourite part of Christmas day?

Our absolute favourite part of Christmas Day has got to be our Superstar transformation for a family karaoke session in the evening. When the energy's a bit low and we all start to flag, we all dress up in suits and fancy dresses like we're on stage and singing our favourite songs! We do it every year and we have such a laugh as we love singing and having fun together.

 **"We all dress up in suits and fancy dresses like we're on stage."**

# How our Christmas campaign star enjoys Christmas

Keira, RNIB's Head Joy Maker and star of our Christmas campaign this year is on a mission to ensure no child with vision impairment misses out on the magic of Christmas.

Keira (14), who lives in Waltham Chase in Hampshire, was born with bilateral optic atrophy which caused her optic nerve to not form properly. She also has nystagmus, a condition that causes involuntary movement of her eyes which makes it hard for her to focus her sight.

**Keira tells us:** "I love my accessible letter from Santa. When it came through the post, I couldn't believe I had a letter for me in braille! With my special braille letter, I get to join in with the magic of Christmas, just like everyone else!"

We've asked her to share with us some of the other things that make her Christmas special.



## What do you enjoy making or baking at Christmas?

"I'm not big into baking, but I occasionally bake Christmas cookies and some years we make Angel Delight, which I enjoy."

## Have you got any special plans this year?

"Over Christmas we're planning to go down to Kempton in Somerset and see my stepdad's mom and spend some time with her, and then I'm also going to go and see my dad too. And me and my family are going to do a parkrun. So, lots of time spent with lots of family basically. I'll also probably put on a Christmas show again this year which is a thing I do at home for my family. I have a piano in my bedroom, so I perform pieces and do vocals for them. And I often organise meetups with my visually impaired friends over the summer, but we're thinking of organising a Christmas one this year as well, to go to a café and have food, hot chocolates, and Christmas treats together."

## What Christmas events are you looking forward to the most and why?

"I have my Christmas concert at school, and I'm in the rock band, so I'll perform with them, and I'll probably be in the choir too. Christmas Day parkruns are also always a favourite. We haven't planned to go to any this year, but there are always lots of pretty light shows all around, which are really fun to go to. There's one nearby that I like to go to on the steam railway which is pretty cool."

# Finding more information and support

## Thank you for reading

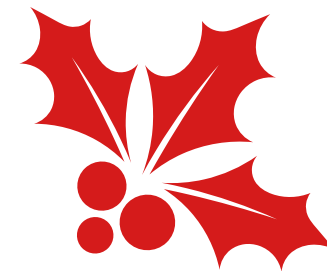
We hope you've found plenty of inspiration in this guide to fill your Christmas with all the festive joy that makes this time of year so special.

If you'd like to help RNIB's Joy Makers make Christmas special, visit our Christmas Hub ([rnib.in/ChristmasAtRNIB](https://rnib.in/ChristmasAtRNIB)), where you can find more about RNIB's other services, including Letters from Santa. Visit our Christmas Hub at Joy Makers Christmas Appeal.

Thank you to the Children, Young People, Families and Education team for its invaluable work in creating this guide.

Our Children, Young People, Families and Education team is here to support families raising a child with vision impairment.





Our service provides advice and guidance on all aspects of family life, early years, education and transition to adulthood. We can also provide details of partner organisations who can also help you. If you'd like to learn more, email us at [cypf@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cypf@rnib.org.uk) or call the RNIB Helpline on **0303 123 9999**.

**All that's left is to thank you again for reading  
The Joy Makers' Guide to Christmas and to wish  
you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.**