

December 2024

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## 10 Tips for Holiday Road Trips

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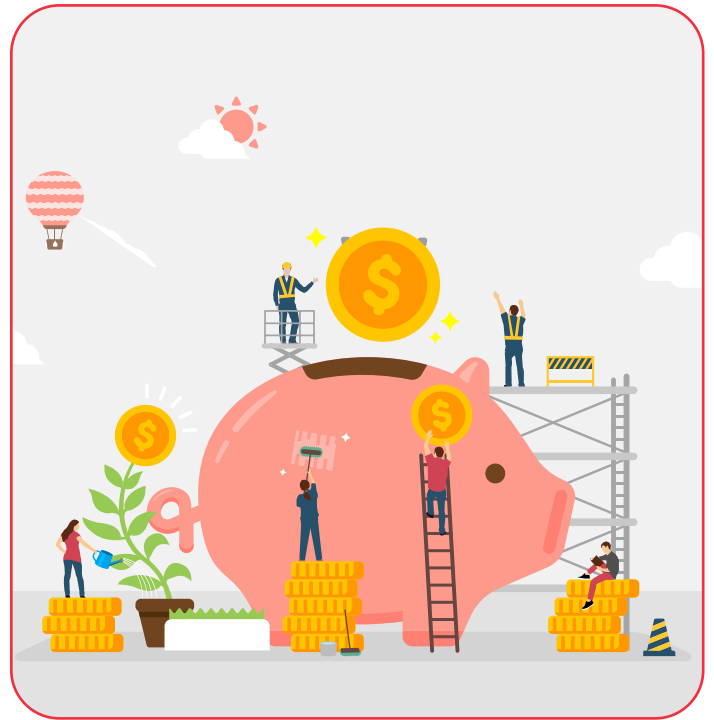
## TUNE IN



Catch *Austin Family* magazine live on "Good Day Austin" every Thursday morning.

**2** December 2024

## FEATURE



**8**

## Money Matters: Earn, Save, and Give Responsibly



Eliza loves drama club at school, taekwondo, and soccer, as well as learning sign language and Spanish. She is a Girl Scout Daisy and adores axolotls.

Photo taken by Jordan Ashley Photography.



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## Editor's Note



CELESTE DIANNE WADE

Wade is a writer, public speaker, and a popular health coach in Austin. The eldest of seven kids and an only child, she loves travel adventures with family.

Every December presents a challenge to prepare for celebrations and be present in the holiday moments. It can seem as if there are never enough hours in the day to do all the things that I want to do, but I always seem to find the time to do the essential things. My top holiday priority is connecting with family and friends.

In that same vein of thought, our Lifelines article this month is all about tips for holiday road trips.

Another family priority is to share the joy of gift giving and empower the kids with the opportunity to give gifts. For this reason, I'm excited about our feature article this month about teaching children practical skills for earning, saving, and giving responsibly. In our Family Matters article, Dr. Betty Richardson highlights the value of teaching generosity.

In our education column, Alison Bogle provides holiday learning strategies, and like most things in life and parenting, there is no one size fits all solution. Don't forget to watch Fox News 7 on Thursday mornings to catch Alison discussing articles from *Austin Family* magazine.

*Austin Family* wishes you the happiest of holiday seasons and encourages you to celebrate your favorite traditions and make memories that will last a lifetime.

May love and blessings abound as we prepare for 2025.

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# Austin IN ACTION

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## December Did You Know?

1965

Trail of Lights first opened as the Yule Fest.

Source: [www.austintexas.org](http://www.austintexas.org)

## Austin's Coldest Christmas Day

1983: high of 25° and low of 10°

Source: [www.fox7austin.com/](http://www.fox7austin.com/)

## December 27, 1839

Austin was incorporated as the capital of the Republic of Texas.

Source: [www.tshaonline.org/](http://www.tshaonline.org/)

## Armadillo Christmas Bazaar

For nearly 50 years, the Armadillo Christmas Bazaar has been Austin's go-to winter arts fest, where holiday shopping, local art, and live music come together to create a one-of-a-kind holiday experience. From Dec. 14-23 at the Palmer Events Center, this Austin tradition invites visitors of all ages to explore nearly 200 artists showcasing their unique creations, from fine art to handmade gifts.

With 30 bands performing on the intimate Armadillo stage, guests can enjoy three live performances each day, adding a vibrant soundtrack to your holiday shopping experience.

The Armadillo Christmas Bazaar is a destination for discovering Austin's creativity while enjoying a laid-back, festive atmosphere filled with delicious food and beverages. Whether you're a first-timer or a longtime visitor, this iconic event provides an opportunity to be a part of something that's as much a part of Austin as the live music and art that defines the city.



## "Ice Rodeo" Returns to Downtown Austin

Ice Rodeo returns for the third year at the Four Seasons Hotel with even more to see and do this winter. Now through Jan. 5, 2025, the hotel is transformed into a winter wonderland with Texas-sized surprises for all ages.

## Outdoor Ice-Skating Rink and Food Trucks

Families wanting an authentic outdoor ice-skating rink can skate upon the hotel's rink with 3,360 square feet of ice overlooking Lady Bird Lake. Built atop the pool and cooled by state-of-the-art chillers, this icy wonderland stays perfectly maintained despite varying outdoor Texas temperatures.

## Rink Side Dining Cabins

Those looking for an icy experience can rent rink side cabins. Available daily, the cabins provide a uniquely festive atmosphere for holiday get-togethers with friends and family to enjoy special food and drinks including shareable small plates, and tableside s'mores.

## Candy Shop

For satisfying a sweet tooth, the rink side candy shop is a new shopping pop-up of confectionery delights, featuring artisanal chocolates, nostalgic candies, and house-made festive treats.

## Holiday Décor

Get into the holiday spirit, as festive charms are on full display across the entire property. After arriving beneath a blanket of thousands of twinkling lights on the front drive and walking through a tunnel of lighted stars, guests can spot elaborate Texas-themed art installations across property.

## Afternoon Tea Service Holiday A-Tea-X

Afternoon tea service, A-Tea-X, returns with a festive flair. Available in the hotel's bar daily, this ornamented offering includes flavored hot teas, tea-inspired cocktails, and an impressive display of holiday treats.

### College-Prep Middle School Pilot Program Launches in Round Rock

Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) partnered with seven middle schools across four states to launch the middle school college-prep program. In addition to Round Rock, other cities include Everett, WA Anchorage, AK and Kentwood, MI.

Research has shown exposure to advanced courses as early as middle school, improves the likelihood that students will pursue higher education in the fields of science and engineering. Based upon this research, EOS is expanding its high school college-preparatory program, currently in 35 states, to include middle school students.

The aim of EOS and its partners is to engage middle school students earlier in their academic journeys, with the intention of building a stronger foundation for college and career readiness. The future looks bright for the EOS middle school pilot in the 2025-26 school year, with the pilot expansion to 50 middle schools nationwide.

### Wreaths Across America

The nonprofit organization Wreaths Across America was founded to continue and expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. The organization's mission is to remember the fallen, honor those who serve, and teach children the value of freedom. These goals are carried out in part each year by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at hundreds of veterans' cemeteries and other locations across the nation.

On Saturday, Dec. 14, at 11 a.m., Wreaths Across America will be at Capital Parks in Pflugerville and at Bagdad Cemetery in Leander. Our veterans will be honored and remembered through the laying of remembrance wreaths on the graves of fallen heroes and the act of saying the name of each veteran aloud.

The community is invited to attend the ceremony and may also sponsor a wreath or volunteer. For more information, see [www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org).



### NORAD Tracks Santa Clause for Austinites

The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) has been tracking Santa since 1955 when a young child dialed the misprinted phone number from a department store advertisement in the local newspaper. That phone number rang into the Continental Air Defense Command (CONAD) Operations Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The tradition continued when NORAD was formed in 1958. Each year since, NORAD has dutifully reported Santa's location on Dec. 24th to millions of children and families across the globe.

NORAD tracks everything that flies in and around Canada and the United States 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in defense of North America. Homeland Defense is its priority. However, on Dec. 24th, NORAD has the very special mission of also tracking Santa.

NORAD Tracks Santa (NTS) has grown tremendously over the years. Today through satellite systems, high-powered radar, and jet fighters, NORAD Canadians and Americans track Santa Claus on his journey not only for Austinites but for the entire globe. Millions of people around the world track Santa with NORAD via their website, social media, mobile apps, and calls to the NTS Operations Center.

On Dec. 1st through the Christmas season, the NORAD Tracks Santa website offers family-friendly games, videos and information about Santa and NORAD. All of this is made possible by the amazing generosity of NORAD volunteers and government and corporate partners who help for free.

The advertisement features a man in a dark blue martial arts uniform with yellow trim on the left, and a young child in a white uniform with a red and blue sash on the right. At the top left is a circular logo for "Master Gohring's Tai Chi &amp; Kung Fu" with a yin-yang symbol. To the right of the logo are five red stars and a quote: "The funnest thing in the history of funnest things!" - Sarah F. (6yrs old). The main title "Lil' Dragons" is in a large, stylized font, with "Introductory Special" and "Only 39.95" below it. A bulleted list includes "Week of classes" and "FREE Lil'Dragons Uniform". A circular seal on the right says "BEST VALUE IN AUSTIN SINCE 1996" and "READERS POLL FAVORITES SINCE 2007". Below this is a map showing the location at the intersection of Airport Blvd and ACC Highland, near I-35 and I-183. A QR code is in the bottom left corner with the text "QR Scan to see 'the funnest thing in the history of funnest things!'". At the bottom right, the address "5775 Airport Blvd. Suite 600 Austin, TX 78752" is listed, along with "Next to Kick Butt Coffee" and a "Register Now!" button with the website "www.MasterGohring.com".



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## Family Matters



DR. BETTY RICHARDSON

*Richardson, PhD, RN, CS, LPC, LMFT, is an Austin-based psychotherapist.*



# 7 Ways to Teach Kids Generosity

**Q** My wife and I have children 3 and 7 years old. They are accustomed to getting lots of gifts for birthdays, Christmas, and when we return from a vacation. They have yet to think about and to give gifts to others. We would like our children to begin to focus not only on the gifts they want to receive but to start learning about how to be generous. Do you have any information or suggestions for how we can begin to teach generosity to our children?

**A** Research has found that it is not until around 4 years of age that children begin to understand the purpose behind showing generosity to others or the purpose of giving a gift. There is a significant maturity in young minds between the age 3 and 4 years old.

Research has also found that it is easier for a child to buy consumables (things to eat) for others than it is to buy a toy.

Here are some suggestions to foster generosity and gift giving to others:

1. Take the child to purchase a gift. Dad can take the kids to buy a gift for mom, and mom can take the kids to buy a gift for dad. A conversation about what mom and dad would like or enjoy helps the kids focus on a thoughtful gift for someone other than themselves.
  2. Guide your children through the process of choosing a gift. Talk through your ideas so your children hear what you think about when buying a gift for a friend or family member. Ask questions such as: What does the person like to do? What gift would be fun for a friend? How will the present make the friend feel?
  3. Explain to the kids how a gift for someone else is different from a gift they would choose for themselves.
  4. Make gift giving simple, inexpensive, and fun. The kids can make cards and give them to family, friends, and teachers. Encourage homemade gifts. As children mature, have them participate in earning money to purchase gifts by doing chores. Work with kids to figure out a budget.
- Encourage kids to team up with a sibling to buy a gift.
5. Praise generous acts by kids such as sharing a toy or helping others.
  6. Model generosity.
  7. Read books about generosity. For example: *The Gift That I Can Give* by Kathie Lee Gifford and *The Generosity Habit* by Matthew Kelly.
- The holidays are a great time to begin teaching generosity to your 7-year-old. Be sure to include your 3-year-old in the gift giving process. She may not fully understand the idea of generosity, but she will begin experiencing the joy of doing things as a family.
- Be intentional with the values you choose. Generosity can be a family value not only during the holiday season but throughout the year.

VISITAR [www.austinfamily.com](http://www.austinfamily.com)  
7 maneras de enseñar  
generosidad a los niños

# Money Matters: Earn, Save, and Give Responsibly

SARAH LYONS

*Lyons is a freelance writer and mom of six children including triplets. She enjoys reading, writing, and spending time outdoors with her family.*

As parents, we want our children to understand how to earn money through hard work, and how to save carefully, spend wisely, and give generously. Simply saying “We have to pinch our pennies” or “That costs an arm and a leg” is not going to help them truly understand these complicated concepts. Children learn these important lessons through real-life experiences. Here are some simple but important ways to teach children of any age about money.

## Money has to be earned

Earning money is hard work but this concept can be difficult to understand for kids. You can start teaching your child about how money is earned by paying them for assigned chores. When you mention the word “chores” in front of your kids, you may hear moans, groans, and complaints. The truth is, chores are not only necessary to keep a family household running smoothly, they are a great opportunity to teach your children valuable lessons including responsibility, work ethic, and life skills. When everyone in the family pitches in to do chores, it builds self worth and helps each family member feel like they are contributing to the family. Some families may find that giving an allowance helps children understand the concept of earning a “paycheck” or allowance while other families may assign a dollar amount for specific chores. Give your kids important lessons on the value of the dollar.



## Budgeting

"Any money that our children earn or receive is divided into 4 categories. Tithe 10%, family tax 10%, any amount they choose for savings, and the rest is money to spend or donate. We feel this gives them a sense of how to allocate their funds and has them realize that not all that they earn will be theirs when they receive a paycheck" says mom of three, Candice Zimmers. Every family will have different expectations for savings, spending, and other categories; the main goal is to help your child understand how to budget and save while giving them choices on how they spend their money. If they make a poor choice to spend all they have earned, they are forced to face the consequences. This lesson is best learned when the stakes are lower at a young age, than as an adult when the consequences can be life-altering.

## Developing realistic views of how much things cost

It is hard for children to understand the value of money when they don't have a realistic understanding of how much things cost. While running errands with your kids, show them how much it costs to fill the car with gas, how much the grocery bill is, and how to compare prices while shopping. Give your kids \$20 in cash and ask them to purchase the family lunch at the grocery store. This is a simple lesson that helps them understand the cost of living. "I put the children in charge of the family eating out money," says Sarah Brandt, mom of three. "You want to eat at McDonald's tonight? Cool, but that means no pizza this weekend." Give your kids important lessons on the value of the dollar.

## The gift of giving

There is great value in teaching children to give gifts to others. They learn to be generous, thoughtful, and experience the joy of giving. They also learn the important lesson that gifts do not need to cost a fortune to be cherished. Give your kids a budget and have them think about what each giftee they are purchasing gifts for truly enjoys. Come up with budget friendly gifts your children can buy or create that will bring joy to each person on their list. This process helps your children develop thoughtfulness, budgeting skills, creativity, and the joy of giving while understanding important lessons about how much things cost.

## Understanding banking

Investing, saving, and how banking works are great lesson to teach children. For preschool age children, have your kids place money in a glass jar. This gives them a visual of the money they are earning and they can watch it grow. Older children may benefit from opening a bank account. "I opened a checking and savings account for my 11-year-old." says mom of three, Michelle Lyons. "I asked for a check register so she can learn how to balance her account. I also got her a stack of deposit slips to learn how to do that as well. I explained to her the importance of not telling people her PIN, how to shut off her card if it is misplaced, and the importance of saving." It's also wise to warn your children about the dangers of credit card debt. The credit limit is often far higher than a young adult can handle and the ease of swiping a card to pay for items they want or need is tempting. Interest rates are high and the debt can quickly stack up. Talk with your teens and young adults about credit cards before they make mistakes that can cause problems long term.

The best way you can teach your child about money is to give them real life experiences, allow them to start making decisions on their own at a young age, and to lead by example. If you are a spender and buy items on impulse, they may develop these bad habits as well. If you are a saver and keep a careful budget, your children will likely develop these healthy habits. If you set a budget that allows you to give generously, your child will take notice. If you and your partner often fight about money, this could cause your child to view money discussions in a negative context. Try to remain positive and help them understand that money is not always an enjoyable topic to talk about, but it is important and can help develop security and independence for the future.

## Easy Ways to Teach Children About Money

- Assign chores, and pay them an allowance. Help them create a budget for spending.
- When they have reached the goal, small at first, and let them go out and purchase the item when they've reach the goal.
- Teach them to give to others.
- When your child receives a gift of money, explain that someone worked hard for the money and chose to give it freely.
- Take them shopping and allow them to help compare prices and options.
- Give them cash, and have them pay for items in the store themselves.
- Be careful about always using a credit card. Use cash to show them that money is exchanged for goods and services.
- Encourage your teen to get a part time job.
- Set a good example by using budgeting and careful spending.
- Be open and honest about money, spending, and be willing to answer questions that come up.

## Appropriate Chores by Age

You're ready to make a chore chart and get started but you may be wondering about age-appropriate and realistic chores for your children. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **For 2-3 year olds** - help make their beds, pick up their toys, sweep the floor, wipe up messes, dust furniture, match socks.
- **For 4-5 year olds** - make their own beds, pick up their rooms, carry groceries in the house and help put items away, pick up after themselves (pick up one activity before getting out new one), water the plants, pull weeds, set or clear table for meals, sort laundry by color.
- **For 6-9 year olds** - help take care of family pets, help fold and put away laundry, sweep and vacuum the floor, take out the trash, help wash and dry dishes.
- **For 9-12 year olds** - load and unload dishwasher or hand wash dishes, help prepare meals, rake leaves, help with younger siblings, clean mirrors, help clean bathroom, walk the dog, mop the floor.
- **For 13-18 year olds** - clean the bathroom, do their own (or the family's) laundry, wash windows, cook simple meals, babysit younger siblings, mow the lawn, help with pet care.



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## 5th Grade Winner Ahmet Serdar Yumusak

Deer Creek Elementary School

### The Algorithm of Compassion

Day 365: It's been a year since the robot apocalypse takeover. Everyone is a robot and literally all I eat is raisins.

At 6:00 AM, I have to go to the drugstore for food. On the way, I check the news and, like always, it's half about me, the other half... a robot who remembers being human.

On the news they said his coordinates, a bunker, and the way he defeats other robots is by uploading viruses to their systems.

Knowing his coordinates, I pivot and head for walk a little and find myself at his location. After a human, the robot pulls me inside. He says, "I am Benjamin from M.I.T, I know who you are and I need to defeat the leader of robots, King Flip Phone."

"Flip Phone?" I ask, "Yeah, Flip. But the thing is I..."

Day 366: Benjamin and I head to the Robots' HQ. We sneak stealthily into the building and reach the control room. Guards rush in, ready to attack, but Flip Phone is off. "Halt! Let's hear what you need, Dr. Benjamin."

"Why are you misleading these robots, Flip?" Benjamin demands.

## 4th Grade Winner Cameryn Peterson

Pond Springs Elementary School



Elizabeth had just finished her last class of the day when the school bully knocked her books out of her arms. "Oopsies!" she giggled, and everyone around her started pointing and laughing. Super embarrassed,

Elizabeth picked up her books and ran home, tears streaming down her face.

When she got home, she flopped onto her bed and yelled into her pillow, "I WISH PEOPLE RESPECTED ME!"

The next morning, her mom surprised her with bacon and eggs. "Weird," Elizabeth thought. "I usually have to make myself oatmeal." At school, everything felt strange. The hallways were quiet, no one was being mean, and everyone had perfect handwriting!

That night at home, her cat Bear ran in front of her, making her spill a cup of water all over her mom. To Elizabeth's shock, her mom's eyes started flickering like a broken light! "Wait, is Mom a robot? Are all the kids at school robots too?" She had to find out!

The next day, armed with balloons, Elizabeth filled them with water from the school's garden hose. She pulled the fire alarm and ran outside and waited. But, when she went back inside to see what was taking everyone so long, she found her classmates lying on the ground, sparking like her mom. The sprinklers had gone off, and everything went blurry. Then, she fainted.

Suddenly, Elizabeth woke up to her mom calling, "Time for breakfast!" "It was all a dream," she whispered. "Bacon & Eggs?" Elizabeth asked. "This isn't a restaurant, Elizabeth. Make yourself some oatmeal."

Oatmeal never sounded so good!

YOUNG WRITERS  
WINNER



EVERYONE AROUND  
INTO A ROBOT



## 4th Grade Runner Up Cora Morales

Becker Elementary School

### The Milk Mustache Mystery

One sunny day at Becker Elementary, the kids in Ms. Pascual's class get a rare treat of cookies and milk! We walk to the playground, and our teacher hands out the cookies and milk to us.

Mrs. Pascual calls to me, "Cora, here's your gluten-free, dairy-free cookies with almond milk."

"Time for a class photo with milk mustaches!" Ms. Pascual. Everybody takes a big gulp of milk. The photographer's camera light flashes. Everybody has a milk mustache except me.

"Aaaaaahhhhhhhh! What's happening?" I scream. "Teacher, help!" But my teacher has turned into a robot.

"What do I do?" I say to myself. "What would Mr. Granger do? She'd go to the library." I pass the library office on my way to the library and hear him talking to a robot. "That's sus," I whisper.



his bunker. I  
er seeing I'm  
m Professor  
have a plan  
."

need help..."

Headquarters.  
h the throne  
waves them  
in," he taunts.  
Benjamin

Flip's eyes flicker with rage. "Humans abandoned me when the modern iPhones were invented! I wanted to prove I'm still valuable."

"I think flip phones are unique and cool!" I say in a childish way

Flip shot up, surprised. "You really think so?"

"Yes," Benjamin agrees. "We want to compromise, not fight."

Flip sighs deeply. "Maybe I've been too harsh. I felt forgotten."

"We can start over, together, and create something remarkable," I suggest.

Flip nods slowly. "Agreed. Let's start with a peace treaty."



**5th Grade Runner Up**  
**Mila Lucia Gahr Hosking**  
Ridgetop Elementary School



**Cyber Punk**  
I didn't mind the smell much. We were perfectly hidden behind a pile of burnt rubber tires and trash, and the robots suspected nothing.

We were the last two people in Cape May, New Jersey and I thought we might survive. Then, Anita sneezed.

All the robots looked at the pile we were hiding behind and slowly turned their big metal heads towards us, peering through their large red, horrifying eyes that always seemed to watch you. Before we could realize what was happening, we heard footsteps that sounded like they could destroy a city into pieces. I wasn't mad, I was confused.

How did this happen? I was just working in the classroom when a fire burned through the dry grass patio. All I saw was a robot smile. All I heard was screaming and screeching for help.

A terrifying robot grabbed my foot and I snapped right back into the present. Dry branches cut my face as I ran through the woods, sobbing, yelling for mercy and life.

Anita wasn't far behind me. We are three years apart. She was the computer nerd, I was the jock. We never got along. She was such a punk, or maybe I was. My mother's last words before she was taken away were, "Take care of your sister!" I never questioned it.

I ran until my legs had no more energy left.

I climbed this tall tree and I was screaming for Anita.

"Anita! Anita!"

Shockingly, she came out walking, no robots behind her, a little grin on her face.

"I did it!" She said between gasps and wheezes. Had she hacked into the robot circuits? Fought them off?

I felt safe with my sister in my arms.

We were going to be okay.

," calls  
milk. The  
body turns into  
ream.  
to a robot too.  
Hermione  
he Principal's  
cackling

At the library, I smell milk. "That's weird," I think. I find a red book, How To Be A Principal, and it's dripping milk. There's a big splotch of milk next to the chapter "How to Get Your Students to Behave."

It says, "To turn your students into perfect robots, put nanochips in the milk and flash a bright light to activate them." The reverse is to give a second serving of milk to break the nanochips. Then they decompose and get pooped out.

I sneak by the principal's office. He's studying a map to plan his robot invasion. I load up a cart with more milk in the cafeteria. Then I return to the playground.

I give my classmates a second serving of milk and take a photo. Flash! They turn back into students. No more robots. I'm glad I'm lactose intolerant so I can save the day!

# A Sweet Approach to Holiday Learning

## The Learning Curve



### ALISON BOGLE

*Bogle is a writer living in Austin with her husband and three children. A former fourth grade teacher, she now enjoys writing about children and education. You can also catch her talking about articles from Austin Family magazine each Thursday morning on FOX 7 Austin.*



As a kid, I thrilled to the thought of winter break. I dreamed of beginning and ending my day in the same pair of pajamas, taking to the streets on my bike to find a friend – this was pre-cellphone, mind you – and catching up on my favorite cartoons. I can guarantee you that I did not dream of extra math app practices, assigned reading lists, or forced science experiments. In today's world of lingering Covid-related learning gaps, involved parenting, and focus on competition and achievement, however, many families now view winter break as an opportunity to catch up, or even get ahead, learning-wise.

Are the holidays meant for merry-making and playing or is a little dose of “Bah Humbug” in the form of studying the way to go? Perhaps, like whipped cream on your warming cup of hot chocolate, blending the two strategies makes for a sweeter solution. Let's examine the benefits of each approach. Remember, like most things in life and parenting, there is no one size fits all solution. You'll want to choose the strategy that best aligns with your individual family and its needs.

### Play, Play, Play

It's no surprise that this approach gets you the most brownie points with your child. However, there can be some true benefits to taking a playful approach to the holiday break. With the dizzying pace of many kids' lives these days, they rarely get a genuine pause from commitments like homework, basketball practice, and piano lessons. Rates of anxiety in children are on the rise and, although not the sole cause for all kids, the hectic pace of life is certainly a contributing factor for many.

There is real value in reducing kids' levels of cortisol the body's main stress hormone. Winter break also allows your child's body to catch up on developmentally important sleep and his nervous system to revel in an uninterrupted stretch of time in which to downshift. This can be a true holiday gift for parents, kids, and the entire family.

Another benefit to putting schoolwork on the back burner during the break is that it frees up time for family fun and bonding. Break out great-grandmother's cookie cutters and spend time creating memories

in the kitchen or sign up for that family volunteer experience you've always meant to participate in. Your activity doesn't have to be holiday related – spending time together making memories and growing closer is the goal. Time spent connecting as a family helps you to catch up on what your child is thinking and feeling and that is worth its weight in gold.

### Bah Humbug!

While learning over the holidays might not be your child's first choice, the idea probably doesn't deserve a “Bah Humbug.” The break from school can be a great time for a struggling learner to receive reinforcement in the form of tutoring or extra practice. Because the day will not have been taken up with hours of school time, your child will be fresh for review and reteach.

Talk with your child's teacher about where to focus your energy, as well as about what resources might be available. Another plus to helping your child fill in his learning gaps or get ahead during the break is that he can enter back into school with a renewed

sense of confidence, leaving some of his related stress and pressure behind with the old year.

### Blended

For many families, a blended solution may be the best choice. This approach incorporates lots of unstructured time ripe for creativity and family bonding, but also includes some targeted learning to address any areas of concern.

Many people are aware of “summer slide,” or the loss of academic skills during the summer, particularly in math and reading, that children experience when they are not in school for an extended amount of time. There can be some learning loss over the holidays, but it is typically not significant enough to warrant true concern. Unless your child is struggling in school before the break, the main benefit of the blended approach comes from keeping his brain active and in the routine of working with learning concepts such as math facts and writing conventions.

Following the holiday break, many teachers report a few days of sluggishness in their students as everyone readjusts to the learning routine. A blended approach during the holidays will keep your child on track so he is less likely to experience the effects of a lack of learning structure and routine.

### Keep it Fun

No matter which approach you choose for your family, make fun the goal for everyone. If you're working on math, find math apps or games that the whole family can play. You can also incorporate math into everyday holiday activities, like cooking or baking. You'll be making memories in the kitchen together while helping your child to conceptualize measurements like cups, ounces, liters, and grams at the same time. A trip to the grocery store for ingredients becomes an opportunity to add up prices and calculate tax. Double your recipe and now multiplication and possibly fractions are involved.

Writing holiday cards for family and friends provides the perfect opportunity to practice spelling, handwriting, and vocabulary. Also, set aside time to sit down and read together as a family, whether that's taking turns reading aloud from the same holiday book, or just enjoying the peace of reading and relaxing together.

Remember, your child's teacher can be a great resource, so be sure to check in with him or her. They can help you decide where best to focus your efforts and can even suggest fun activities that will align with your child's learning goals.

Happy holidays and happy learning!



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# 10 Tips for Holiday Road Trips

## Lifelines

CATHERINE MICHALK

*Michalk is a native Austinite, writer, and mom of three. You can follow her family's adventures at [www.catherinemichalk.com](http://www.catherinemichalk.com)*



**If you're planning to take a road trip this holiday season you're in good company! The American Automobile Association (AAA) estimated over 115 million people traveled more than 50 miles from home over Christmas and New Year's in 2023. According to AAA, 90% of those surveyed traveled by car. To help you make your road trip less stressful and more kid-friendly, we're sharing our top 10 tips for family-friendly holiday road trips.**

### 1. Make a Holiday Decoration Bingo Card

Lights, wreaths, inflatable Santas, and more! Keep your kids busy by giving them a holiday decoration bingo card and seeing who can fill it up first. Just look out your windows during the drive and cross off the things on your card. You can DIY this by adding clip art to a 5x5 grid or find a pre-made printable version online. Laminate the bingo cards and use dry erase markers so you can use them multiple times!

### 2. Bring a Potty (Consider Using Pull Up Diapers)

It doesn't matter how well your 3 or 4-year-old is potty trained, chances are he will have a potty emergency as soon as you're 10 miles from the nearest restroom. Pack a training potty so you can pull over and let your child take care of business without waiting (or braving a gas station bathroom). If your little one is newly potty trained consider putting him in a pull up for the drive. It can feel like a step backward in your potty-training journey, but we promise it is better than dealing with a wet, stinky car seat.

### 3. Download Content Beforehand

If you plan to show your kids movies or listen to an audiobook, take some time to download the content onto your device before you leave your home WIFI. Streaming on the road may be possible, but you're sure to hit some dead zones. Avoid buffering by being proactive.

### 4. Make DIY Christmas Busy Bags

Before your road trip, fill up some

gallon-size baggies or brown paper bags, with small toys to keep your kids busy. Check out your local dollar store for inexpensive options like Christmas sticker books, small puzzles, and red and green pipe cleaners. The most important thing to remember with this tip: make sure your kids don't get into the bags before your trip. They will stay busy with their bags for longer if they haven't rifled through them beforehand.

### 5. Bring Healthy Snacks

Traffic, detours, and other factors mean you won't always make it to your preferred stops at the right time. Make sure your kids can spend an extra 20 or 30 minutes in the car by packing healthy, filling snacks. Dried fruit, applesauce squeezies, muffins, and cheese sticks are easy to serve and eat on the road.

### 6. Keep Important Things Easily Accessible

Diapers, trash bags, wet wipes, water bottles, and snacks are just a few of the things you should keep easily accessible during your drive. No one

wants to start unpacking a suitcase in a gas station parking lot just to find their kid's special blanket. If you think you or your kids will want something during your drive, either pack it up front in your purse or diaper bag, or put it on top of your luggage so you don't have to dig around.

### 7. Plan Your Trip Around Your Kid's Schedule

Planning your drive around your kid's schedule is a great way to get more miles from each stretch, but it can look different from family to family. Does your kid nap in the car, or does driving keep them awake? Are you planning to stop for a meal, and if so which one makes the most sense? Make sure you factor in bathroom stops, too, especially when you're traveling with kids who potty trained recently!

### 8. Print Out a Map To Follow Along

For parents with school-aged kids here is a fun activity. Print out a map that shows your whole route and give your kids the map and a highlighter. Have them pay attention to street signs and highway intersections so they can follow along your progress on their own map! They can use the highlighter to mark the roads you've traveled. Ask them to let you know when they think you'll make it to different spots along your route. You'll be surprised at how well your kids can follow along.

### 9. Stock Your Car's First Aid Kit

Before you head out make sure you have a fully stocked first aid kit in your car. You never know when you or your kids will need an ice pack, band-aid, or itch cream. Consider bringing a few doses of children's medicine just in case your kids get sick. The last thing you want to do is run to a pharmacy when you're on vacation.

### 10. Make it FUN

Finally, make your road trip fun by doing things you wouldn't normally do! Get some ice cream or a slushie at one of your stops. Let them pick out

a souvenir at a roadside stop. Plan a picnic lunch at a park along your route. And remember to stay positive about the experience because your kids will pick up on your mood. If you're excited to spend 16 hours in the car they will be too! At least, for the first 6 hours or so...

**115 million people traveled more than 50 miles from home over Christmas and New Year's in 2023**

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# December 2024 calendar

Go to [www.austinfamily.com](http://www.austinfamily.com) for expanded listings.

Check our calendar online which is updated daily. Any family-friendly events can be posted at [www.austinfamily.com](http://www.austinfamily.com) and will be made live once approved. Certain restrictions apply.

## Sun 1

**Judy Moody and Stink: The Holly Joliday.** 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Judy Moody is making a list and checking it twice, but all her brother, Stink, wants this year is snow. Austin Scottish Rite Theater, 207 W. 18th St. \$17 - \$24.  
[www.scottishritetheater.org](http://www.scottishritetheater.org).

**The Muppet Christmas Carol.** 12:30 to 2 p.m. and 3 to 4:30 p.m. Experience a special effects screening of The Muppet Christmas Carol. Bullock Texas State History Museum, 1800 Congress Ave. \$8 - \$12. [www.thestoryoftexas.com](http://www.thestoryoftexas.com).

**Sunday Matinee at the Library: Kung Fu Panda 4.** 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Watch the family-friendly film. Bring snacks, pillows, and blankets. Round Rock Public Library, 200 E. Liberty Ave.  
[www.roundrocktexas.gov](http://www.roundrocktexas.gov).

**CYT Austin presents Disney's Mary Poppins Jr.** 2 to 3:30 p.m. and 6 to 7:30 p.m. See the stage adaptation of the classic tales of Mary Poppins. Brentwood Christian School: Worley-Barton Theater, 11908 N. Lamar Blvd. \$18.  
[www.cytaustin.org](http://www.cytaustin.org).

**Zilker Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony.** 6 to 7 p.m. Tree Lighting Ceremony. Pre-event music by the Austin Civic Wind Ensemble. Zilker Park, Moontower, 2100 Barton Springs Rd.  
[www.austintexas.gov](http://www.austintexas.gov).

**Peppermint Parkway.** 6 to 9 p.m. Experience millions of dazzling lights, enchanted villages, and dancing characters as you follow Pepper and Mint on their way to meet Santa! Circuit of the Americas, 9201 Circuit of the Americas Blvd. \$45 - \$99.  
[www.peppermintparkway.com](http://www.peppermintparkway.com).

## Mon 2

**Music And Movement @ Laura's.** 2 p.m. 30-minute dance party for little ones to get their sillies and wiggles out. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Free Play @ Laura's.** 4 to 6:30 p.m. Meet up with your friends at the world's best play date. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd.  
[www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Board With Books - Tabletop RPG Edition.** 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Get started with tabletop roleplaying games and connect with new friends to play. Central Library, 710 W. César Chávez St. Gallery. FREE. [www.library.austintexas.gov](http://www.library.austintexas.gov).

## Tue 3

**Kinder Connect Tours.** 9 to 10 a.m. If you or a friend have a child who will be five by September 1, 2025, we invite you to experience a typical day in Kindergarten at Redeemer. Redeemer Lutheran School, 1500 W. Anderson Ln. FREE.  
[www.redeemerschool.net](http://www.redeemerschool.net).

**Holiday Bazaar.** 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Decorations, trees, clothing, and more treasures, plus gift cards. Round Rock Serving Center Resale Shop and Boutique, 1099 E. Main. FREE.  
[www.rrasc.org](http://www.rrasc.org).

**Handel's Messiah.** 8 p.m. The Austin Symphony Orchestra presents its holiday tradition, Handel's Messiah, accompanied by Chorus Austin for the entire family! Riverbend Centre, 4214 N. Capital of Texas Hwy. \$19 - \$64.  
[my.austinsymphony.org](http://my.austinsymphony.org).

## Wed 4

**Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo.** 6 to 9 p.m. Stroll the zoo and enjoy over 3 million holiday lights. Cameron Park Zoo, 1701 N. 4th St., Waco. \$10 - \$13.  
[www.cameronparkzoo.com](http://www.cameronparkzoo.com)

## Thu 5

**Austin Parks Foundation Movies in the Park - The Grinch (2018).** 4:30 to 8 p.m. Join us for our last Movies in the Park event of 2024! Balcones District Park, 12017 Amherst Dr. FREE.  
[www.austinparks.org](http://www.austinparks.org).

**DeSTEMber Bash.** 5:30 p.m. Bring the entire family. Girlstart, 1400 W. Anderson Ln. \$25 - \$45. [www.girlstart.org](http://www.girlstart.org).

**CONTINUED: Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo,** see Wed 4.

## Fri 6

**Eighth Annual Free Nativity Display Celebration.** 6 to 9 p.m. Holiday interfaith celebration display. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 700 N. Heatherwilde Blvd. FREE.  
[www.pfnativity.com](http://www.pfnativity.com).

**Mariachi Herencia de Mexico: A Mariachi Christmas.** 7:30 p.m. Celebrate the holidays with the heartwarming sounds of Mariachi Herencia de México. Bass Concert Hall, 2350 Robert Dedman Dr. \$29 - \$79.  
[www.texasperformingarts.org](http://www.texasperformingarts.org).

**Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker.** 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Step into a world of holiday magic. The Long Center for Performing Arts, 701 W. Riverside Dr. \$20 - \$125.  
[www.balletaustin.org](http://www.balletaustin.org).

**'Twas the Night Before: Tales of the Winter Season.** 8 to 10 p.m. Experience a festive, fabulous, and joy-packed show. First Baptist Church Austin, 901 Trinity St. \$20. [www.eventvesta.com](http://www.eventvesta.com).

**Light Up the Lake.** Big and glowing, holiday cheer is coming back in Round Rock. [www.roundrocktexas.gov](http://www.roundrocktexas.gov).

**CONTINUED: The Muppet Christmas Carol;** see Sun 1; **Peppermint Parkway,** see Sun 1; **Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo,** see Wed 4.

## Sat 7

**Old Town Christmas Festival.** 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Old Town comes alive with Christmas joy. 105 N. Brushy St.  
[www.leandertx.gov](http://www.leandertx.gov).

**December Art in the Park.** 10 a.m. Join us for the Art in the Park, the City of Kyle Parks and Recreation Department's all-ages art program. [www.cityofkyle.com](http://www.cityofkyle.com).

**Read to a Therapy Dog.** 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Read to Princess Buttercup, Dump Truck, or Bently, our reading therapy dogs from Divine Canines. Wells Branch Community Library, 15001 Wells Port Dr. [www.wblibrary.org](http://www.wblibrary.org).

**Chinese Learning Playground @ Westbank.** 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Chinese Learning Playground is a Mandarin Chinese study group for school-age children. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr.  
[www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Holiday Sing Along and Stroll.** 3 p.m. Family-friendly event is on Congress Ave. between 8th and 11th streets. FREE.  
[www.downtownaustin.com](http://www.downtownaustin.com).



**Austin Trail of Lights Fun Run.** 5 to 10 p.m. Visitors seeking an early look at the Austin Trail of Lights can participate in the family-friendly run. 2100 Barton Springs Rd. [www.austrintrailoflights.org](http://www.austrintrailoflights.org).

**Vista Brewing Movie Under the Stars: Home Alone.** 5:30 to 9 p.m. Family and dog friendly. Great for groups. Vista Brewing, 13551 FM 150 W. FREE. [www.vistabrewing.com](http://www.vistabrewing.com).

**Cocoa With Cowboys.** 6 to 8:00 p.m. Come for free cookies and cocoa with your favorite cowboy characters. Williamson Museum, 716 S. Austin Ave., Georgetown. FREE. [www.williamsonmuseum.org](http://www.williamsonmuseum.org).

**Holiday Bash featuring Ensemble ATX.** 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. Kick off the holiday season with a festive evening. Riverbend Centre for the Arts, 4214 N. Capital of Texas Hwy. \$60 - \$135. [www.atxmusic.com](http://www.atxmusic.com).

**Conspirare Christmas presented by Conspirare & Cactus Café.** 8 to 10 p.m. Come share a holiday tradition. Hogg Memorial Auditorium, 2300 Whitis Ave. \$10 to \$160. [www.conspirare.org](http://www.conspirare.org).

**CONTINUED: Judy Moody and Stink: The Holly Joliday,** see Sun 1; **Peppermint Parkway,** see Sun 1; **Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo,** see Wed 4; **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker,** see Fri 6; **'Twas the Night Before: Tales of the Winter Season,** see Fri 6; **Light Up the Lake,** see Fri 6.

#### Sun 8

**Family Day.** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Join us for a fun-filled day in the garden with sculpture searches and crafts. UMLAUF Sculpture Garden & Museum, 605 Azie Morton Rd. FREE. [www.umlaufulsculpture.org](http://www.umlaufulsculpture.org).

**Hotel Viata Tree Lighting Event.** 5 to 7 p.m. Bring your family and friends for a magical evening of holiday festivities. Hotel Viata, 320 S. Capital of Texas Hwy. FREE. [www.hotelviata.com](http://www.hotelviata.com).

**CONTINUED: Peppermint Parkway,** see Sun 1; **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker,** see Fri 6; **'Twas the Night Before: Tales of the Winter Season,** see Fri 6; **Conspirare Christmas presented by Conspirare & Cactus Café,** see Sat 7.

#### Mon 9

**CONTINUED: Music and Movement,** see Mon 2; **Free Play,** see Mon 2.

#### Tue 10

**Free Days - Blanton Museum of Art.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Blanton Museum of Art is free for all visitors. 200 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. FREE. [www.blantnomuseum.org](http://www.blantnomuseum.org).

**Trail of Lights.** 6 p.m. Austin's longest-running holiday event. There are free nights and general admission starting at \$8. Zilker Metropolitan Park, 2100 Barton Springs Rd. [www.austrintrailoflights.org](http://www.austrintrailoflights.org).

**CONTINUED: Kinder Connect Tours,** see Tue 3.

#### Wed 11

**All Ages Storytime with Special Guest Heartsong Music @ Westbank.** 10:30 a.m. Come enjoy music, movement, and fun with Heartsong Music. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Peter Pan.** 7:30 p.m. This high-flying musical has been thrilling audiences of all ages for close to 70 years and is now being brought back to life. Bass Concert Hall, 2350 Robert Dedman Dr. \$15. [www.texasperformingarts.org](http://www.texasperformingarts.org).

**CONTINUED: Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo,** see Wed 4; **Trail of Lights,** see Tue 10.

#### Thu 12

**Buda Holiday Lights.** 5 p.m. Historic Stagecoach Park, 880 Main St. [www.discoverbudatx.com](http://www.discoverbudatx.com).

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**Ventana Ballet: The Watchmaker's Song.** 7:30 p.m. An Immersive Retelling of The Nutcracker that takes place in and around the Museum. Neill-Cochran House Museum, 2310 San Gabriel St. \$18 - \$54. [www.nchmuseum.org](http://www.nchmuseum.org).

**CONTINUED: The Muppet Christmas Carol**, see Mon 1; **Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Peter Pan**, see Wed 11.

### Fri 13

**CONTINUED: Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4; **Ballet Austin's The**

**Nutcracker**, see Fri 6; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Buda Holiday Lights**, see Thu 12; **Peter Pan**, see Wed 11.

### Sat 14

**Round Rock Pop-up Art Show.** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. A fun day of retail therapy and supporting local businesses. Prete Plaza, 221 E. Main St. [www.roundrocktexas.gov](http://www.roundrocktexas.gov).

**Selfies with Santa Holiday Festival.** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Waiting in line for Santa at the mall can overwhelm anyone, especially kids with special needs. Live Oak Unitarian Universalist Church, 3315 El Salido Pkwy. FREE. [www.liveoaku.org](http://www.liveoaku.org).

**Lost Pines Christmas: Merry on Main.** 10 a.m. Get ready for a jolly good time on Main. A day filled with festive fun. Downtown Bastrop, 931 Main St. [www.visitbastrop.com](http://www.visitbastrop.com).

**Armadillo Christmas Bazaar.** 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. A cornerstone of Austin's holiday season for nearly five decades. Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Rd. \$12 - \$60. [www.armadillobazaar.com](http://www.armadillobazaar.com).

**Mini Horses and Cocoa @ Westbank.** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Westbank backyard with miniature horses, Silly Sparkles balloon creations, and cups of cocoa. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Toy Hospital Workshop.** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Bring broken or damaged toys to Fix-It Austin's Toy Hospital, where skilled volunteers will guide you through repairing toys. University Hills Branch, Austin Public Library, 4721 Loyola Ln. [www.austintexas.gov](http://www.austintexas.gov).

**Lost Pines Christmas: Lighted Christmas Parade.** 6 p.m. Get ready for a jolly good time with the City of Bastrop's Lighted Christmas Parade. Downtown Bastrop, 931 Main St. [www.visitbastrop.com](http://www.visitbastrop.com).

**CONTINUED: Judy Moody and Stink: The Holly Joliday**, see Sun 1; **Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4; **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker**, see Fri 6; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Buda Holiday Lights**, see Thu 12; **Ventana Ballet: The Watchmaker's Song**, see Tue 10; **Peter Pan**, see Wed 11; **Chinese Learning Playground @ Westbank**, see Sat 7.

### Sun 15

**Craft Your Own Hanukkah Menorah @ Westbank.** 2 to 3:30 p.m. Celebrate Hanukkah by crafting your own Hanukkah craft with backyard music. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**CONTINUED: Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker**, see Fri 6; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Ventana Ballet: The Watchmaker's Song**, see Tue 10; **Peter Pan**, see Wed 11; **Armadillo Christmas Bazaar**, see Sat 14.

### Mon 16

**Crafts for Teens: Stress Ball @ Westbank.** 4:30 p.m. Hang out after school and relax with a simple craft. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**CONTINUED: Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Music and Movement**, see Mon 2; **Free Play**, see Mon 2; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Ventana Ballet: The Watchmaker's Song**, see Tue 10; **Armadillo Christmas Bazaar**, see Sat 14.

### Tue 17

**CONTINUED: Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Kinder Connect Tours**, see Tue 3; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Armadillo Christmas Bazaar**, see Sat 14.

### Wed 18

**Morning Story Hour with Lake Travis Library Book Mobile @ Winston's.** 10 a.m. A morning of books, donuts, and fun at Winston's. Lake Travis Community Library, 1938 Lohman's Crossing. [www.laketravislibrary.org](http://www.laketravislibrary.org).

**Zine Night.** 5:30 to 7 p.m. Learn how to make and craft a zine with the Austin Public Library, Central Library, 710 W. César Chávez St. Gallery. FREE. [www.library.austintexas.gov](http://www.library.austintexas.gov).

**CONTINUED: Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4; **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker**, see Fri 6; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Buda Holiday Lights**, see Thu 12.

### Thu 19

**Candlelight: Holiday Special featuring "The Nutcracker".** 6:30 to 7:45 p.m. Candlelight concerts bring the magic of a live, multi-sensory musical experience to Austin. St David's Episcopal Church, St. David's 301 E. 8th St. \$34.50 - \$62.50. [www.eventvesta.com](http://www.eventvesta.com).

**CONTINUED: Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4; **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker**, see Fri 6; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Buda Holiday Lights**, see Thu 12; **Armadillo Christmas Bazaar**, see Sat 14.

### Fri 20

**Holiday Work & Play @ Laura's.** 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. Families are invited to hang out at Laura's, where we'll have holiday movies playing, toys out to play with, and art supplies for kids to use. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

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**Candlelight: Holiday Special Featuring "The Nutcracker."** 6:30 to 7:45 p.m.

Candlelight concerts bring the magic of a live, multi-sensory musical experience to Georgetown. Alma Thomas Fine Arts Center, Southwestern University, 1001 E. University Ave. Georgetown. \$34.50 - \$64.50. [www.eventvesta.com](http://www.eventvesta.com).

**CONTINUED: Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4; **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker**, see Fri 6; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Buda Holiday Lights**, see Thu 12; **Armadillo Christmas Bazaar**, see Sat 14.

#### Sat 21

**Building Exploration @ Westbank.** 1 to 3 p.m. Materials provided for to stack, create, and build something special. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**CONTINUED: Judy Moody and Stink: The Holly Joliday**, see Sun 1; **Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4; **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker**, see Fri 6; **Read to a Therapy Dog**, see Sat 7; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Buda Holiday Lights**, see Thu 12; **Armadillo Christmas Bazaar**, see Sat 14.

#### Sun 22

**CONTINUED: Judy Moody and Stink: The Holly Joliday**, see Sun 1; **Peppermint Parkway**, see Sun 1; **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker**, see Fri 6; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Armadillo Christmas Bazaar**, see Sat 14.

#### MON 23

**CONTINUED: Free Play**, see Mon 2. **Ballet Austin's The Nutcracker**, see Fri 6; **Trail of Lights**, see Tue 10; **Armadillo Christmas Bazaar**, see Sat 14.

#### Wed 25

#### CHRISTMAS

#### HANUKKAH

#### Thu 26

**CONTINUED: Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4.

#### Fri 27

**CONTINUED: Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4.

#### Sat 28

**CONTINUED: Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4.

#### Sun 29

**Sunday Matinee at the Library: Rise of the Guardians.** 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Watch a family-friendly film. Bring snacks, pillows, and blankets. Round Rock Public Library, 200 E. Liberty Ave. [www.roundrocktexas.gov](http://www.roundrocktexas.gov).

**CONTINUED: Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo**, see Wed 4.


#### Mon 30

**Winter Crafts @ Westbank.** 1 to 3 p.m. Stay cozy in the library by dropping by to make some wintry crafts with friends. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com). **CONTINUED: Free Play @ Laura's**, see Mon 2.

#### Tue 31

**Noon Year's Eve @ Laura's.** 11 a.m. Join us for "Noon" Year's Eve at Laura's Library with a concert by Mr. Will, dancing, and fun. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Austin's New Year.** 7 p.m. Auditorium Shores, 900 West Riverside Dr. FREE. [www.austintexas.gov](http://www.austintexas.gov).



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## An Interview with Brenda Pollard

BY ALISON BOGLE



Austin is bursting with people doing exciting work, and that includes moms who work hard to raise their kids. Every other month, Austin Family features a short interview with an Austin mom doing the extraordinary work of parenting.

### Austin, meet Brenda Pollard.

#### **AF: Tell our *Austin Family* readers a little bit about yourself and your family.**

My love of Austin started when I attended the University of Texas. The Jester dorm was twice the size of my Nebraska hometown! My husband, Brad, and I met in New York City, but when we were ready to start a family, Austin was the natural choice. We are now raising two Austinites – Brody, 13, is in seventh grade and Brooklyn, 11, is in fifth grade.

#### **AF: Who has been a role model for you as a mom and why?**

My mother has been my biggest role model. She had a love for life that I try to emulate because life sure is a lot easier when you look for the positive in things! I also am lucky to be around a lot of great role models in my day-to-day life and I am constantly learning how to be a better mother by watching my friends and family.

#### **AF: What are a few good things about raising kids in Austin?**

I just love the friendliness of the families we meet! Austin is a very open and welcoming place and we have found good friends in all of the areas we are involved in – our schools, church, kids' activities, and the Down syndrome community. We love the diversity of activities that our

family can participate in and we especially love all of the hiking trails in the area.

#### **AF: What is some of the best parenting advice you've received?**

Life is like juggling and you have to figure out which of the balls are glass and which are rubber. You're not going to be able to keep all the balls in the air at all times, so you need to decide which ones are most important to focus on and those are the ones you don't let drop.

#### **AF: If you had known then what you know now, what would you have worried about less as a parent?**

This one is easy. When I was pregnant, I was so worried that having a child with special needs would negatively impact our lives. How wrong I was! Brooklyn has enhanced our lives and the lives of those around us in such incredible ways, from her sense of humor to helping us to slow down and celebrate all of the victories, both big and small. I wish I could go back and tell my pregnant self that I had nothing to worry about and that our family was about to receive the best possible gift.

#### **AF: What's one of the biggest challenges of parenting you didn't expect?**

It is so hard to balance it all and to bring my best self to everything I do. I have to constantly give myself grace and remind myself there is only so much time in the day to accomplish it all. It's OK to say "no" or to give 80% versus 100% on some things.

#### **AF: What do you love these days about being a mom?**

Every single part of it (well, almost)! I love having more in-depth conversations with my kids, traveling together, and seeing their growth in activities and interests as they develop into independent, empathetic young adults.





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# KIDZONE

## Holiday Crafts



### SNOW SLIME

One of the best parts of the holiday season is the extra time at home with family. Planning fun creative holiday-themed activities with kids is a perfect way to establish new family traditions, engage grandparents, and burn-off some energy. Plus, it gets children away from screens and gives them opportunities to explore new interests.

This holiday STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) project is one of our favorites. After all, who doesn't love slime? But this isn't just any old slime, it's Snow Slime, with snowflakes, glitter, or whatever holiday themed decorations you want to add.

### Materials Needed:

- Elmer's glue
- Foil snowflakes
- Blue/silver/white glitter
- Saline solution
- Baking soda
- Plastic cups
- Plastic spoons
- Zip lock bags

### Instructions:

- Mix together 1 small bottle of glue, 1 tsp of baking soda, and 1 tsp of saline solution in a bowl.
- Stir until smooth.
- Mix in food coloring and any other desired items (glitter, plastic bugs, etc).
- Scoop into zip lock bags.



### DIY SNOWBALLS

There is nothing worse than being cooped up on an ugly winter day, when it's cold and dreary outside. There's an easy solution probably lurking in your closet, drawer, or recycling bin: do-it-yourself snowballs. And of course, once you have kid-friendly snowballs, you have all the makings for an indoor, snowball fight.

Newspaper snowballs are the easiest to make! Scrunching newspaper (or magazine pages) into ball shapes is great for preschool and kindergarten motor development. Once they are shaped, you can wrap a little masking tape around each ball to keep it secure. You can be as ambitious as you like, using socks, furry yarn, terry cloth, or fleece. Once the snowballs are in-hand, let the competition begin.



### PAPER PLATE SANTA

The paper plate Santa is perhaps the gold-standard of holiday craft projects because it's fun, flexible, and simple. All you need is a paper plate, glue, construction paper, cotton balls, or other furry, fuzzy materials. You can also add interest with paint or markers or even use household objects like buttons or dried beans for the eyes. Sure, we all know what Santa looks like, but this project gives each kid the opportunity to create their own unique look for our jolly gift-giving friend.

*Greater Austin YMCA Holiday Camps offer care at six school-age locations and Camp Moody Outdoor Camp with trained Youth Development Leaders, who will guide kids through a fun and engaging array of themed crafts, activities, and organized games. Learn more at [www.austinyymca.org/camp/school-holiday](http://www.austinyymca.org/camp/school-holiday).*

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