

# The Language of Christmas

English learning resource · EN

## Key words & expressions · English

12 learning entries

**Study task:** Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

1

### festive

DEF

relating to or appropriate for a festival or celebration, especially Christmas; full of the joy and atmosphere of the season

*Festive captures the warm, cheerful atmosphere of the holiday season — decorations, food, music, family. It is not just about Christmas specifically but any celebration with that bright, communal energy.*

*The office was looking very festive — lights, a tree, and the smell of mulled wine everywhere.*

*She always gets very festive in December — the decorations go up on the first of the month.*

2

### to gather

DEF

to come together in one place, especially for a shared purpose or celebration

*Gather is warm and communal — it suggests choice and belonging rather than obligation. Families gather at Christmas; friends gather for celebrations. It carries more emotional weight than just 'meet'.*

*Families gather around the table on Christmas Day to share a meal and stories.*

*We gathered in the living room to open presents on Christmas morning.*

3

### a tradition

DEF

a custom or practice that is passed down through generations, repeated year after year as part of a shared identity or celebration

*Traditions carry meaning beyond the action itself — they connect us to the past and to each other. Understanding British and American Christmas traditions is essential context for cultural English conversations.*

*Hanging stockings by the fireplace is a tradition in many British households.*

*Every family has its own traditions — and learning about English ones is a window into the culture.*

4

### to deck the halls

DEF

to decorate a home or space festively, especially with lights, greenery, and seasonal decorations

*A classic Christmas idiom — from the carol. Knowing festive idioms makes English feel alive at seasonal moments. Very common in British and American holiday conversation.*

*They spent the whole weekend decking the halls with lights and garlands before the guests arrived.*

*In December, English speakers deck the halls — and knowing this phrase lets you join the conversation.*



5

**to make merry**

DEF

to celebrate joyfully, enjoy yourself with others, and spread happiness during a festive occasion

*Make merry is a slightly old-fashioned but still common expression, especially at Christmas. It captures the social, warm, communal nature of British festive culture.*

*The office party was the perfect chance to make merry and forget about work for one evening.*

*English speakers make merry in December — and knowing how to describe it helps you feel part of the culture.*

6

**to spread cheer**

DEF

to make people around you feel happier, warmer, or more festive by your presence or actions

*Spread cheer is deeply tied to the Christmas season in English. It is the spirit behind gift-giving, carol-singing, and even just smiling at strangers. Using this phrase shows cultural fluency, not just language fluency.*

*One of the best ways to spread cheer is simply to be kind and present — especially in December.*

*She spread cheer at the office by bringing in homemade food and decorating her desk.*

7

**to ring in the new year**

DEF

to celebrate and welcome the arrival of the new year, usually at midnight on the 31st of December

*Ring in the new year is the standard English expression for new year celebrations. The verb 'ring' comes from church bells that marked the hour. It is used naturally in conversation and media every December.*

*We rang in the new year together, watching the fireworks and making our resolutions out loud.*

*How do you ring in the new year where you are from? That is a great conversation starter in English.*

8

**goodwill**

DEF

kind, friendly feelings and a genuine desire to help others — the spirit of warmth and generosity

*Goodwill is the emotional core of the Christmas season in English culture — the motivation behind charity, kindness to strangers, and family togetherness. 'Goodwill to all men' is one of the most famous English phrases of the season.*

*The festive season is a time to show goodwill — to family, to colleagues, and even to strangers.*

*She felt so much goodwill towards everyone during December that she volunteered at a food bank.*

9

**to wrap up**

DEF

(1) to finish or conclude something, OR (2) to wrap something in paper as a gift

*Wrap up has two very useful meanings in the festive context: finishing (wrap up the year, wrap up the meeting) and gift-wrapping. Knowing both meanings helps you use this versatile phrasal verb naturally in seasonal English.*

*We wrapped up the year with a big team lunch and a review of everything we had achieved.*

*She stayed up until midnight wrapping up all the Christmas presents before the children woke up.*



10

**to get into the spirit**

DEF

to embrace the mood, energy, and emotions of a particular occasion or event enthusiastically

*Get into the spirit is a flexible idiom — the spirit of Christmas, the spirit of learning, the spirit of a team. It means fully participating emotionally, not just going through the motions.*

*Even if Christmas is not your tradition, you can still get into the spirit by enjoying the music and food.*

*She found it hard to get into the spirit of English at first, but once she found podcasts she loved, everything changed.*

11

**to be stuffed like a turkey**

DEF

To feel extremely full after eating too much.

*A humorous seasonal simile, especially associated with Christmas meals.*

*After lunch, everyone was stuffed like a turkey.*

*I cannot eat dessert—I am stuffed.*

12

**it's the thought that counts**

DEF

The kindness behind a gift or action matters more than its price or result.

*A fixed reassuring expression often used when a gift is small or imperfect.*

*The present was simple, but it is the thought that counts.*

*My cake looked terrible, but they said it was the thought that counted.*

