

'Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat!'

Christmas is the biggest festival in Britain and is celebrated on 25th December. The four weeks before Christmas are called Advent, and are traditionally celebrated in churches by lighting a candle each Sunday during Advent. Nowadays, many people in Britain are not very **religious**, but they still celebrate Christmas. But **watch out** - the preparations begin long before Advent. In fact, as early as September or October, you start to see signs that Christmas is **on the way**.

The first places to tell us that we should be thinking about Christmas are the shops. People in Britain spend on average over £600 (around \$1000) per person on Christmas every year, and the shops encourage people to spend more and more. Shops put up Christmas decorations and play **cheesy** Christmas songs or **carols**; and some shop workers wear **Christmas hats**. Some big shops on Regent Street and Oxford Street in London create wonderful displays in their windows with moving characters, falling snow, colourful lights and music.

So what do people buy in preparation for Christmas? Well, Christmas decorations; Christmas cards to send to your friends and relatives; presents for your loved ones and **wrapping paper** to wrap them up with. And of course food! **Apart from** the special Christmas dinner of roast turkey or goose, people buy lots of chocolates, nuts and snacks for everyone to enjoy.

But the children are the most excited that Christmas is coming. They start making lists of presents they would like, and give them to their parents, or send them to **Santa Claus**. In December, they can also open their Advent calendars. Advent calendars are a way of counting down to Christmas. They have a window to open for every day from 1st - 24th December (Christmas Eve).

A basic Advent calendar has a **Christmassy** picture behind each window, but the children's favourite is usually a chocolate Advent calendar, with a chocolate for every day of the month. It's a great **build-up** to the **overeating** that goes on at Christmas!

Glossary

religious – following a system of beliefs and practices relating to God	watch out – mind you; be prepared
on the way – approaching, drawing closer	cheesy – of cheap quality or bad in style
carols – traditional and/or religious songs that people sing at Christmas	Christmas hats – hats with pointy tips, usually red in colour and with some fur around them, traditionally worn at Christmas for fun
wrapping paper – decorated paper used to cover presents	apart from – here, in addition to
Santa Claus – the imaginary jolly old man with a white beard and a red suit who brings presents to children at Christmas	Christmassy – relating to Christmas and capturing/representing the jolly mood of the season
build-up – anticipation, increasing feeling as a high point (here, Christmas celebrations) approaches	overeating – eating too much

Read and listen to the story online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/britain/081216_advent.shtml

1. Reading Quiz

Are these sentences true or false? Or is the answer not given in the text? Circle the correct answer.

1. Preparations for Christmas start in December.
True / False / Not given
2. People in Britain usually eat turkey or goose for Christmas dinner.
True / False / Not given
3. Children send their present lists to Santa Claus or give them to their parents.
True / False / Not given
4. Most people in Britain are very religious.
True / False / Not given
5. Advent calendars never contain chocolate.
True / False / Not given

2. More or less?

Which of these expressions mean more than £600? Which mean less than £600? And which mean approximately £600? Put each expression into the correct column:

£600 on average
about £600
at least £600
almost £600
roughly £600
over £600
up to £600
in excess of £600
not quite £600

More than £600	Less than £600	Approximately £600

3. Wordsearch

Try to find the words associated with Advent in the puzzle below.

There are ten words to find. Words can be written horizontally (g), vertically (i) or diagonally (m)

d	f	c	a	r	j	s	o	u	b	d	t
e	p	a	h	t	z	n	a	d	w	m	r
c	h	n	c	o	n	b	v	n	e	k	a
o	c	t	p	a	c	a	l	x	t	j	d
r	c	a	r	o	l	o	g	b	r	a	i
a	i	v	e	q	u	e	l	e	t	y	t
t	r	e	s	j	m	p	n	a	v	n	i
i	s	r	n	a	n	g	v	d	t	s	o
o	f	a	a	g	y	o	z	v	a	e	n
n	s	g	c	a	n	d	l	e	b	r	a
s	g	e	k	h	l	f	h	n	x	o	l
h	p	b	s	i	u	h	m	t	f	r	o

Advent	carol	average	traditional	candle
decorations	snacks	chocolate	calendar	Santa

Answers

1. Reading Quiz

- Preparations for Christmas start in December.
False
- People in Britain usually eat turkey or goose for Christmas dinner.
True
- Children send their present lists to Santa Claus or give them to their parents.
True
- Most people in Britain are very religious.
False
- Advent calendars never contain chocolate.
False

2. More or less?

- £600 on average
- about £600
- at least £600
- almost £600
- roughly £600
- over £600
- up to £600
- in excess of £600
- not quite £600

More than £600	Less than £600	Approx. £600
at least £600	almost £600	£600 on average
over £600	up to £600	about £600
in excess of £600	not quite £600	roughly £600

3. Wordsearch

d		c				s				t
e			h				a			r
c			c	o				n		a
o				a	c				t	d
r	c	a	r	o	l	o				a
a		v				e	l			t
t		e	s				n	a		i
i			r	n				d	t	o
o		a	a					v	a	e
n		g	c	a	n	d	l	e		r
s			e	k				n		l
				s					t	