

Give your Christmas a country feel



by Metro Creative Connection

Christmas decorations can range from grandiose lighting displays to more subtle adornments. Some families may prefer more traditional holiday decor, while others might like the look of modern trimmings.

Holiday decorations can

decor, and those who want to create a country Christmas can start with their tree. Instead of traditional holiday lights, choose lights that look like candles while adorning the tree with wooden ornaments and strands of popcorn.

- Forgo traditional wrapping paper. Instead of flashy, store-bought wrapping paper, wrap presents in brown paper and put presents under the tree as early as possible. Instead of store-bought gift tags, create your own and attach a candy cane or another candy to the gift.

- Think nature with decorations. Items gathered from nature can give a home a rustic appeal during the holidays. Hang a homemade wreath on the front door and include pine cones and clippings from evergreen trees when adding decorative accents around the house.

also be used to create an atmosphere reminiscent of a certain type of locale, giving a home a holiday in the city vibe or a more rustic feel. For those who prefer a rustic look reminiscent of a country Christmas, consider the following tips.

- Start with the tree. The Christmas tree is the center of many a home's holiday

Tuck a few decorative woven baskets in corners to further emphasize a rustic look.

- Create homemade ornaments. Homemade ornaments can also give a home a more rustic look come the holiday season. Spend an afternoon creating holiday crafts with the kids and use these instead of store-bought ornaments. For those who

are especially gifted craftsmen, put your woodworking skills to the test to create decorative wooden stockings that, if not functional, can be replaced with more traditional stockings come Christmas Eve.

- Don't forget the music. Another way to create a country Christmas is to play country Christmas albums

instead of classical or more traditional Christmas records. Nearly every country music star of the past and present has recorded a Christmas song or album, so create a master playlist of country Christmas songs on your digital music player and play it throughout the season to set the holiday mood in your household.

Make a child's first holiday special

Thoughtful gifts can make this first holiday season one of joy for new children in the family.



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A baby's life is filled with milestones. First smiles, first steps and first words are just a few of the moments parents will treasure.

A baby's first holiday season is another special time to cherish. Shoppers seeking gifts to make a baby's first holiday special have many clever, cute and functional items to choose from. Several of these gifts can become keepsakes to be tucked into memory boxes for growing kids to look at later in life.

- **Christmas pajamas:** What better way to await for the arrival of Christmas than in a pair of snuggly pajamas? Send pajamas ahead of Christmas Day so that new parents will have plenty of adorable photo opportunities as their baby boy or girl tears open the gifts. Stores stock several different fun and festive prints, or look into pajamas that can be personalized.

- **Photo print package:** Photography packages can involve the entire expanding family and will catalog special moments in time. Purchase studio or on-location time with a private photographer, or use one of the popular photography chains found in malls and department stores.

- **Personalized framed print:** Commemorate the first holiday season with your child by getting a print made with his or her name and age. Leave a space on the print so that the child's parents can customize it even further with their son or daughter's footprints. Include a matted frame and child-safe ink or paint to complete the gift.

- **Keepsake ornament:** Some families embrace the tradition of adding a new ornament to their Christmas trees each year. Purchase an ornament for the new baby with the year so he or she can join in the tradition.

- **Crochet or knit blanket:** Crafty individuals can make a blanket that the newest addition to the family can enjoy during the chilly days of winter. These blankets often become treasured keepsakes that may be passed down throughout the family or kept tucked away for kids so they can give them to their own children once they start their own families.

- **Rocking horse:** Babies

don't wait long before they start to run around and climb. A classic rocking horse makes for a fun baby gift, and rocking horses come in many different styles. If you are the family carpenter, you can even purchase some unfinished wood from a craft store and then make this into a homemade gift your favorite little guy or gal will always cherish.

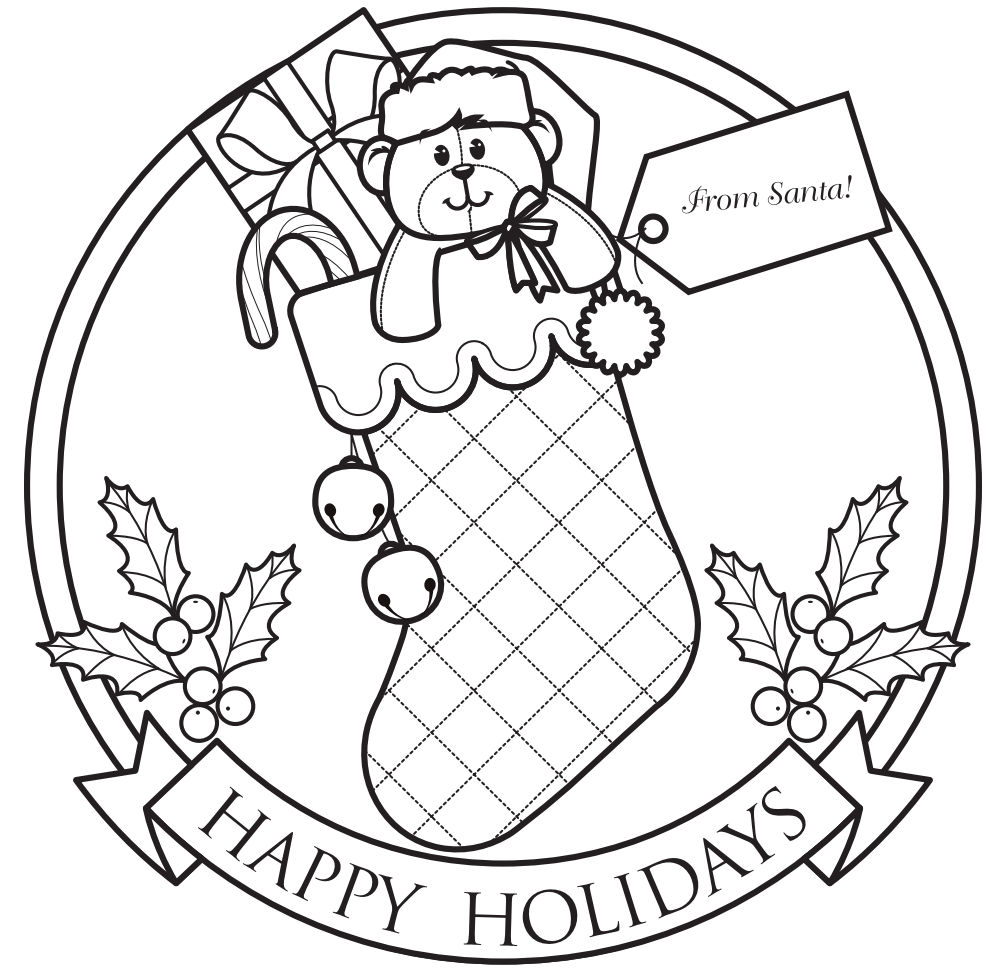
- **Piggy bank:** Foster good saving habits by gifting a personalized piggy bank. Get kids off on the right foot by depositing a few dollars into the bank before giving the gift.

A new baby brings many changes and fun experiences. Gift-givers can make a baby's first holiday season one filled with joy and whimsy with creative gift ideas.



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