



**Playdatebox**

# GINGERBREAD CHRISTMAS

THE PURPOSE OF A PLAYDATEBOX IS TO CONNECT GENERATIONS THROUGH PLAY



## HOW TO BUILD A PLAYDATEBOX

Choose 1 picture book



Choose 1 hands-on activity



Choose 1 question



Gather supplies in advance for instant fun with the grandkids

Play together in person or via videoconference

## HOW IT WORKS

Develop relationships virtually or in-person

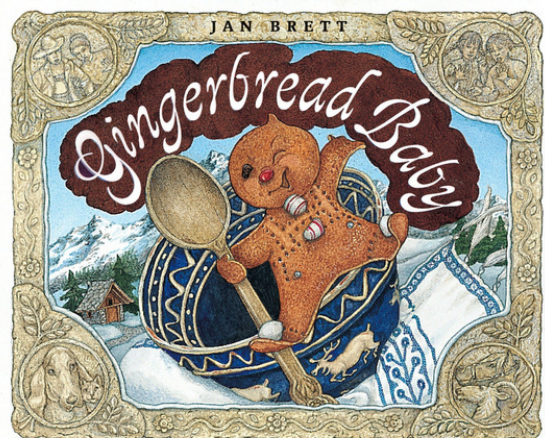
The *Gingerbread Christmas Playdatebox* is a themed box of fun designed to get you and a child you love playing together.

The goal of this box is to help grandparents and grandchildren create connections in playful ways, regardless of distance.

This Playdate focuses on two values we think are important to pass on: **Selflessness & Generosity**

We've gathered several ideas for you to choose from. Just choose one book, an activity, and a question that are age-appropriate for your grandchild, gather your supplies, and start playing!

# CHOOSE A FAVORITE PICTURE BOOK:



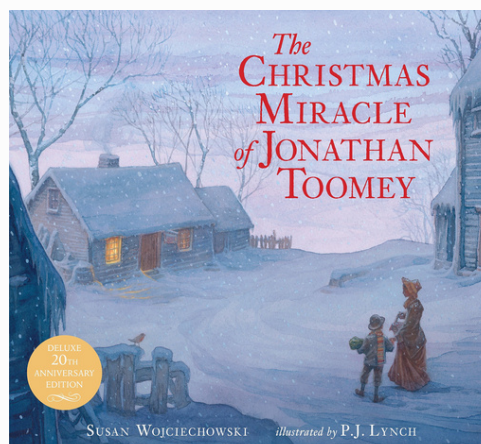
## ***Gingerbread Baby***

By Jan Brett  
available as a board book  
(ages 2-6 years)  
Watch Matti outsmart the sneaky  
gingerbread baby.



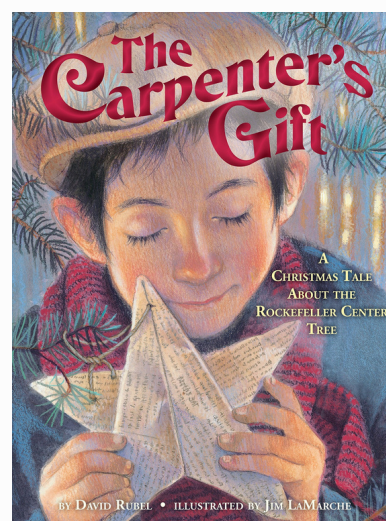
## ***The Trees of the Dancing Goats***

by Patricia Polacco (ages 5-10)  
In the middle of her family's preparation  
for the festival of lights, Trisha visits her  
closest neighbors, expecting to find them  
decorating their house for Christmas.  
Instead they are all bedridden with scarlet  
fever! A beautiful cross-cultural holiday  
story!



## ***The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey***

By Susan Wojciechowski, illustrated  
by P.J. Lynch (ages 5+)  
\*also available on Readeo.com  
Jonathan Toomey is the best woodcarver in  
the valley, but he is always alone and never  
smiles. But one early winter's day, a widow and  
her young son approach him with a gentle  
request that leads to a joyful miracle.



## ***The Carpenter's Gift***

by David Rubel, Illustrated by Jim  
LaMarche (ages 5-9)  
A story of the first Rockefeller Center  
Christmas Tree and the kindness of  
strangers. After bringing joy to thousands  
as the Rockefeller Center tree, its wood  
will be used to build a home for another  
family in need.

# HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES TO TRY

## Activity #1

### Make Gingerbread Together

Gingerbread cookies are a terrific sensory experience for a child. When we make them, we take time to stop and smell each ingredient we add: molasses, ginger, cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon.

If you don't want to bake your cookies, leave the egg out and add a little extra water and you'll have a **wonderfully-scented play dough!** You'll find my favorite gingerbread recipe on the next page.



## Activity #2

### Gingerbread Baby Hide and Seek

In the book, *Gingerbread Baby*, the entire town has to chase down Matti's escaped gingerbread baby. Cut out a gingerbread person using cardboard, felt, or craft foam and hide it around the house and take turns finding it.

#### How to Do This Remotely:

Your gingerbread baby can travel around with you all season. Take photos of him doing all kinds of interesting things with you — going to a concert, traveling in your suitcase, etc. and text your photos to your grandchild. Or, play hide and seek via video conference. Cover your video camera, hide your gingerbread baby within view of the camera, and then uncover it again.



Make your own gingerbread figures out of craft foam, felt, or a purchased kit.

# Gingerbread Cookies

## The Ingredients

- 1/2 c. (1 stick) butter, softened
  - 1/2 c. firmly packed brown sugar
  - 1 large egg
  - 1/4 c. molasses
  - 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
  - 2 1/2 c. all-purpose flour
  - 2 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
  - 1 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
  - 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg
  - 1/2 tsp. baking soda
  - 1/4 tsp. ground cloves
  - 1/4 tsp. kosher salt
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- Combine the butter and brown sugar in a large bowl and mix with an electric mixer until well-combined and fluffy.
  - Next, beat in the molasses, egg, and vanilla until well-combined.
  - In a separate, smaller bowl, mix all of the dry ingredients. Whisk the flour, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, baking soda, cloves and salt together.
  - Add the dry ingredients to the butter and brown sugar mixture and mix just until the flour is all incorporated (don't overmix!)
  - Shape the dough into two 1"-thick disks and roll each between 2 sheets of wax paper to 1/4" thick.
  - Refrigerate until firm, at least 30 minutes.
  - Heat oven to 350 degrees F.
  - Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Cut out cookies
  - Place on the prepared baking sheets at least 1" apart and chill for 10 minutes.
  - Bake until the cookies are set and the edges are beginning to brown, 12 to 15 minutes. Let cool on the baking sheets for 3 minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.





## Activity #3

# Decorate Your Gingerbread

It won't matter whether you decorate a full-on gingerbread house from scratch, use a purchased kit, or just add some icing to an ugly sweater cookie. You can make a special day with a child you love. And best of all, you don't have to be in the same room to decorate together!

### How to Do This Remotely:

You'll need supplies on both sides of your video call, but whether you are creating side-by-side or remotely, make sure everyone in the room has a supply of gingerbread, frosting, and colorful candies!



## Simplify the Setup

# Gingerbread Hints

Here are a few hints for easy gingerbread decorating:

- 1) Assemble gingerbread houses in advance. Use royal frosting or granulated sugar melted in a skillet for "edible glue." If you don't plan to eat your house later, a hot glue gun makes sticking house pieces together super simple.
- 2) Put the icing into individual pastry bags (with decorator tips, if they are available) and be sure there are plenty of bags to go around! Use frosted pop tarts as your gingerbread base if you want to simplify.
- 3) Contain small candies in mini bowls or ramekins. This makes them easier for little hands to manage.
- 4) The creative process works differently for each person. Allow messes. They can be cleaned up later.





## Values to Hand Down

### Selflessness and Generosity

Nearly every precious and vivid childhood memory I have of Christmas is prefaced by some act of selflessness or generosity. One year, it was me and my brother hiding in the bushes after we anonymously delivered a warm Christmas dinner my mother had made for our recently-widowed church custodian.

Another year, sensing my loneliness for my old friends and my old neighborhood after we had moved to a new city, my mother gave me a music box that played *Edelweiss*, a favorite song I had sung as a solo in a children's music group before we had moved. She knew that it would help me understand that *she understood* how much I was missing my past life. I still have it.

One snowy Christmas, my grandmother drove 500 miles in below-freezing winter weather. In her back seat were a dozen potted plants she carefully protected from freezing. I had expressed a desire to learn the secrets of her green thumb, so she brought me a start from each of her favorite houseplants.

Another precious memory is the year my 12-year-old son saved his lawn-mowing money and purchased a ring for me on eBay after I lost my wedding ring and hunted for days and days in vain.

The children's books I love at Christmastime (and the ones I most often read to my own grandchildren) include stories of loss, lean times, sacrifice, and generosity. I think the reason they resonate so much with me is that they are representations of the sacrifices made by the Savior, Jesus Christ, whose birth this season celebrates. And as we serve our families and our neighbors, giving out of our own abundance, we are emulating Him.

Nearly every faith tradition includes this same element of charitable service, so it's a value I want to hand down, regardless of the faith tradition my children and grandchildren choose for themselves. And Christmas is the perfect season.

Four years ago, my then 4-year-old granddaughter was helping me decorate a gingerbread house when she spontaneously wrapped her little arms around my neck and said, "Grandma, I love you so much!" That day represented my very first playdate ever. So for me, gingerbread has become a symbolic representation of what it felt like to be loved completely and to return that love wholeheartedly. I'm hoping that you and your grandchildren will be blessed to share that same kind of connection.

## Connection Question:

Can you remember a time when someone sacrificed something important in order to give a gift to you?

*Each month, I include a "connection question" or two that you can ask one another. Sharing these "family stories" will help create bridges of connection between you and your grandchild. Take turns answering any of these questions, and when possible, record or write down the answers!*



Some additional questions:

- What smell or fragrance most reminds you of the holiday season? What about a food that just tastes like Christmas to you?
- What Christmas present was the most memorable gift you ever received? Why?
- Tell me all about Christmas like when you were a child. How is it different now?
- Did you ever have a disappointing or difficult Christmas season? What happened?

Try the *Polar Express* Christmas ideas from our website as well! [Playdatebox.com/polar-express/](https://www.playdatebox.com/polar-express/)

# RESOURCES GALLERY



## **Gingerbread Man Sticker Set**

\$16.99 for 12

12 foam Gingerbread Man Craft Kit. Including 12 foam self-adhesive craft sheets, 12 cards and 12 red ropes. Assembled: 4.3" x 5.5". Mail 'em to your long-distance grands!



## **Grandma's Toy Library**

In this article, I share how I have chosen to give gifts to my grandchildren without inundating their parents with clutter.



## **Hot Chocolate Shop Signs Printables**

Download fun printables so your grandkids can set up their own hot chocolate shop for dramatic play. Open/Closed Signs and a Hot Chocolate Shop Sign.



## **Hot Chocolate Shop - Money, Menu, and Order Forms Printables**

Download free printables for your preschool dramatic play Hot Chocolate or Cookie Shop.



## **Gingerbread House Door Hanger**

\$7.48 for 12 kits (plus shipping)

I snagged a few of these easy stick-on craft foam kits to help keep the kids occupied at the kids' dinner table while the adults chat. Oriental Trading has lots of options.



## **Gingerbread House Kit**

I love gingerbread house kits for quick, inexpensive holiday playdates. Purchase one online or at your favorite grocery store.





If you are new at playing with grandchildren, and feel a little overwhelmed, don't worry. Keep your playdates simple! Choose one book, plus one activity, plus one question. That's all you need for a Playdate!

My vision is that you will use the contents of this newsletter to help you connect with a child you love, regardless of distance! Most Playdatebox activities are designed so that they can also be enjoyed "remotely" via videoconferencing software like Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Just assemble supplies on both sides of the call so that you can play "together." Visit our website, [Playdatebox.com](https://www.playdatebox.com) for lots of ideas on how to do this in creative ways.

If you enjoy these ideas, please let others know, and tag us on social media with a photo of you enjoying a Playdatebox activity.

We love to engage with our customers and give away free Playdateboxes every month on our Instagram feed. Find us at @playdate\_box and follow us for your chance to win. We share all of our best ideas about creating family fun.

### **Sample Gingerbread Christmas Playdatebox:** Build your own and ship one to a child you love!



You can add:

- A Favorite Christmas picture book
- A baked gingerbread cookie
- Frosting and assorted sprinkles
- A gingerbread-themed craft project you can do together remotely.

