



## for Blended Families: 10 Tips to Keep Your Sanity

*The first Christmas as a blended family can be both a joyous experience and a time of utter chaos. When two families decide to combine their traditions together, the change can be a real challenge. Here are ten tips to help blended families keep their sanity during the Christmas season.*

### 1. Give Your Kids a Voice and a Holiday Responsibility

Listen to your children's suggestions about holiday activities they would like the family to do together. Make sure kids are a part of the season's activities to increase the likelihood that they will want to participate in the family events. Also, try to make new traditions to celebrate your first Christmas together as a family.

### 2. Make a Flexible Holiday Plan

Reduce some of your chaos during the holidays by making an agreed upon, but flexible, written plan for the major Christmas events your blended family will do together.

### 3. Encourage and Model for Your Children How to Enjoy the Holidays

Be more than a taxi-driver or an events director for your blended family's Christmas festivities. When parents take the time to enjoy the holiday season, they model to their children the importance of togetherness while encouraging kids to take a part in the new family activity versus being spectators.

### 4. Praise Is a Powerful Present!

Make a point of praising family members for their ability to cooperate and to participate in holiday activities. It will not be easy to get everyone on the same page, so when it happens, rejoice and praise it!

### 5. Don't Try to Be a Holiday Super-Parent

Let kids know that there are certain responsibilities and traditions in the Christmas schedule that everyone is expected to participate in and take responsibility for, such as going to religious services, taking part in community service activities or helping with prep and cleanup after family meals and events.

### 6. Don't Be a Grinch When it Comes to Communication

During the holidays, keep communication open. Conduct mini family meetings to briefly review your holiday plans. Use the meeting to acknowledge your children's acts of kindness and to make changes with the holiday schedule. Take a vote on significant changes to events that will affect the entire family.

### 7. Sharing Is Caring

As a blended family, you may have to share part of your children's holiday vacation with your ex-spouse and his or her extended family. It may not be easy, but it is important that you support your child's family relationships by not making any negative remarks or disparaging statements that could cause guilty feelings.

### 8. Don't Be Afraid to Say No

It's not unusual to overextend yourself during the holidays — especially if you are blending the traditions of two families. Don't be afraid to say "no" to doing too much. The holidays are a time to just be together; don't let endless commitments keep you from spending real quality time as a family.

### 9. Relax and Regroup

Exhaustion and stress can put a damper on the holiday season. Take some time each day to have the family relax a little and de-stress — especially after energy-zapping holiday activities.

### 10. Avoid Competitions

Some parents fall into the trap of competing for their children's love during the holidays by purchasing anything and everything for their kids. Avoid the debt trap of trying to outdo your ex with buying expensive gifts. Too often parents cannot afford them. And, let's face it, your kids will likely break the gift before the holidays are over anyway. Financial instability is a number-one parental concern in the U.S. Don't add to your fiscal woes by resorting to using blended-family bribes.