



Fun Hacks for the Holidays

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REEA MEMBER EXPERIENCE
COMMITTEE

December 2025

Fun Hacks & Hints for the Holidays

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December 2025

Holiday Hack Games

✓ Real or ✗ Fake

- Use a hair dryer to thaw frozen turkey faster.

Fake! Please, no.

- “Wrap your gifts in aluminum foil

Real - no tape needed!”

- Use leftover wrapping paper tubes as boot shapers.

Real

- Cookies stay soft if you store them with a slice of bread.

Real! Science says so. The cookies absorb the bread’s moisture.

Creative Gift Hacks

DIY or thoughtful low-cost ideas — wrapping, homemade gifts, and clever re-gifting.

- **Favorite Things in a Jar**

fill a mason jar with someone's favorite candy, coffee pods, or self-care goodies.

- **Handwritten “12 Days of Compliments” cards**

a dozen notes of encouragement tucked into envelopes.

- **Gift a mini hobby starter kit**

like watercolor supplies, candle-making, or a tiny herb garden.

- **Make a personalized playlist**

and pair it with a cute candle for a mood-setting gift.

- **Keep a “re-gift station” labeled with tags for next year!**

Creative Gift Hacks

- **Bundle three small gift cards together and label it**

“Choose Your Own Adventure: Coffee, Treats, or Fun.”

- **Give “themed baskets”**

All green items, or “movie night in a box.”

- **Use fabric scarves or kitchen towels as wrapping paper.**
- **Add QR codes on gift tags linking to a favorite holiday playlist.**

Classroom Hacks

Classroom and instructor humor version

- Keep a spare clicker in your shoe for good luck during presentations.

Fake! *But it would explain the limp in your walk.*

- Carry chocolate to bribe students into class participation.

Real! *100% proven motivational science*

- Use your PowerPoint remote to mute chatty students.

Fake! *But oh, if only....*

- **If the tech fails,**

Announce, 'Today we're going old-school' and write one thing on the board.

- Tell them, 'This will all make sense in unit 17.'

Fake! *There is no unit 17!*

Classroom Hacks

- Use “**Holiday Hack Bingo**” as an icebreaker activity.
- ***Have a “Snowball Toss”** – crumple paper, write questions on them, toss and answer.*
- ***Play “Reindeer Roundtable”**: each student shares a festive teaching tip or story.*
- ***Create a “Wrap That Term” game** – teams wrap boxes labeled with tricky real estate terms and share their definitions.*
- ***Call early finishers** your ‘**pilot group**’ and ask for ‘user feedback’ on the assignment.*

Popular Gifts from the 60's, 70's & 80's



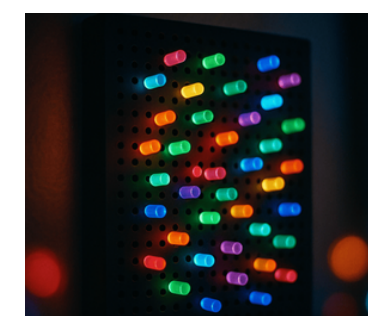
Etch a Sketch



Slip N Slide



Operation



Lite Bright



Play Dough



Easy Bake Oven



Twister



Tinker Toys



Clackers



GI Joe



Weebles

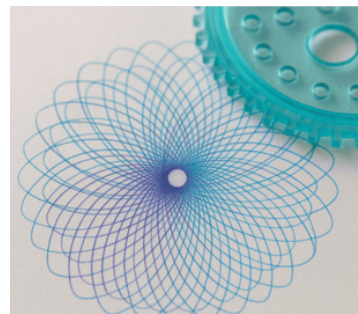


Uno

Popular Gifts from the 60's, 70's & 80's



Simon



Spirograph



Lincoln Logs



Pet Rock



Atari



Rock 'em
Sock 'em Robots

Holiday Cooking/Baking Hacks

✓ Real or ✗ Fake

- You can caramelize onions quickly using a hair straightener.

Fake! You'll get warm, sweaty onions—not caramelization. Plus, you'll ruin your straightener and your dignity.

- ***For FLAKY PIE CRUST substitute sour cream for the cold liquid.***

Real! substitute sour cream for the cold liquid.

- ***Add marshmallows to chili to balance the acidity from tomatoes.***

Fake! You'll get sweet chili with weird white streaks.

- ***If the soup is too salty put a potato in it.***

Real!

- ***Add a spoonful of yogurt to eggs for restaurant-style scrambles.***

Fake! The yogurt curdles instantly and turns your eggs chalky and sour.

Holiday Cooking/Baking Hacks

✓Real or ✗Fake

- **Toast any nuts that you are using in a baking recipe.**

Real! I do mine in batches and keep in the freezer. How to: set oven to 350 and put nuts on a tray or sheet of foil in a single layer. Toast for 10 minutes and then keep checking every 2 minutes until they are aromatic and lightly toasted. Remove from the oven and cool them before using or storing.

- **Put ice cubes on freshly baked cookies to keep them soft.**

Fake! The melted ice makes cookies soggy, not soft; steam doesn't magically "rehydrate" them into bakery perfection.

- **Always rehydrate dried fruit like raisins before using.**

Real! Measure the amount to get used. Cover with hot water, or your favorite liquor, soak for 10-15 minutes and then drain in a strainer before using.

- **Add marshmallows to chili to balance the acidity from tomatoes.**

Fake! You'll get sweet chili with weird white streaks.

Holiday Cooking/Baking Hacks

✓ Real or ✗ Fake

- When baking Pound Cake in the oven, place a pan of hot water to the oven rack below to help keep moist.

Real! And they are better when baked lower and slower at 300 or never higher than 325 degrees.

- Put ice cubes on freshly baked cookies to keep them soft.

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Fake! You'll get sweet chili with weird white streaks.

Holiday Cooking/Baking Hacks

Fast, impressive recipes and time-saving tricks.

- **Can you make mashed potatoes in a Crockpot?**

Yes, google it! Also, you can prepare them ahead of time and then keep them in a crockpot to keep them warm

- **No rolling pin?**

Use a wine bottle it works great!

- **Why would you use flour the cookie cutters?**

It creates nonstick for dough

- **Puff pastry makes it fancy,**

no one needs to know you bought it frozen.

- **If you burn it,**

just call it 'smoky.'

Holiday Cooking/Baking Hacks

- **Chill cookie dough before baking** *for thicker, chewier cookies.*
- **Keep gravy in a thermos so it's hot** *and no one sees how lumpy it started.*
- **If the soup is too salty** *put a potato in it.*
- **Use Hawaiian Rolls to make sliders for a large group.** *Slice the whole pack in half, fill with delicious sandwich toppings, bake, and slice to serve.*
- **Put underripe bananas, avocados, peaches, etc., in a paper bag with an apple.** *The bag traps ethylene gas and speeds ripening dramatically.*
- **To make almost any dish more delicious, use less salt than required** *and add light miso paste towards the end.*

Holiday Cooking/Baking Hacks

- **Roast vegetables on a preheated sheet pan.** *Put the empty pan in the oven while it preheats; when you throw veggies on hot metal, they crisp 2x better and roast instead of steaming.*
- **Rest meats on a wire rack, not a plate.** *On a plate, moisture pools underneath creating soggy underside. On a rack, air circulates so juices stay in the meat and the surface stays crisp. Huge difference in roast chicken, steaks, pork tenderloin.*
- **Heat store-bought rolls with butter and flaky salt.** *Nobody will know you didn't bake them yourself.*
- **Decorate a store-bought cake with powdered sugar and fresh fruit.** *Instant glow-up and people will assume you baked it.*

Holiday Tips for Time Saving

Short on time but still want it to look like you tried? Steal these:

- **Grocery-Store Charcuterie**

Grab cheese, crackers, fruit, nuts, and meat. Layer on a board, drizzle some honey on the side.

- **Lights + One Thing**

Pick one spot and add string lights + greenery or ornaments. Instantly decorated.

- **Napkin Glow-Up**

Tie napkins with ribbon or twine. Add a sprig of rosemary or pine.

- **Signature Self-Service Drink Station**

Pick one easy option: cranberry spritz or warm cider with cinnamon sticks.

- **Tray Trick**

Place one candle, one plant/greenery, one bowl of goodies on a festive tray.

Holiday Tips for Time Saving

- **Pre-Portioned Snacks**

Use recyclable cupcake liners, coffee filters or small cups for nuts, popcorn, or candy. Cute + grab-and-go + minimal clean up.

- **Cozy Pillows & Throws**

Toss a couple of blankets and pillows in the main room. Pops of color and texture go a long way.

- **Bathroom Mini-Refresh**

Fresh hand towels, a festive candle, and a tiny bit of greenery.

- **Hit Play on a Playlist**

Turn one good playlist that's a couple of hours long on repeat before guests arrive. Music brings the festive mood.

Behind The Scenes

Perfect hacks for the person who ends up doing ALL the behind-the-scenes magic

Item to Keep Handy for Late-Night Gift Assembly.

Keep a roll of duct tape

Super Glue

Batteries (all sizes)

WD-40

Screw drivers *(small and large)*

Pliers *(regular and needle nose)*

Pocketknife

Zip Ties

Scissors *(that actually cut)*

Flashlight or head lamp

Advil / Tylenol

Oops... forgot Band-Aid's (always have band-aids handy)

Behind The Scenes

- **Be prepared with an excuse if you have difficulty with the repair.**

Example: I loaned my left-handed wire stretcher to the neighbor, so I can't fix it today.

- **Plug outdoor lights into different circuits**

not just different outlets.

- **Use a smart plug so you can turn lights on/off without walking outside in the cold.**

- **Painter's tape solves 45% of Christmas emergencies**

(until January, anyway).

- **Put all screws and hardware in cupcake liners while assembling**

no more mystery rolling screws under the sofa.

- **Use your phone camera to zoom in on tiny instruction diagrams.**

- **If instructions say "2 people needed,"**

it REALLY means "emotional support person recommended."

Behind The Scenes

- **Label the breaker box BEFORE guests arrive...**

Future YOU, will thank you.

- **Be prepared with an excuse if you have difficulty with the repair.**

Example: I loaned my left-handed wire stretcher to the neighbor, so I can't fix it today.

- **For large gifts**

*remove the door pin (just the pin, not the hinges) to create an extra inch or two of space. Put cardboard or an old blanket under the box and **slide** it instead of lifting. If all else fails: **Go through the back door.***

- **Warm stiff plastic parts with a hairdryer for 20 seconds**

they slide together MUCH easier.

- **Use dish soap as a “temporary lubricant” for tight toy joints**

(harmless & washes off).

Behind The Scenes

After the Holidays Ideas That Help

- **Wrap lights around a paint stir stick or through a empty paper towel roll.**
at the end of the season – they'll unroll tangle-free next year.
- **Use Command hooks under gutters**
for hanging lights without a ladder.

Kids Say the Darndest Things

Funny quotes from kids about the Holiday Season

- **“My elf didn’t move last night.
*He’s probably in Zoom training.”***
- **Santa must do a workout in order to get down the chimney.**
- **Mom says money doesn’t buy happiness.
*but you can buy LEGO’S.”***
- **Turkey is good!
*but chicken nuggets are better.***
- **What does Santa use if he can’t walk?
*A candy cane.***

Kids Say the Darndest Things

- **Dad took our tree to the barber.**

Because it needed a trim

- **Do you know what snowmen eat for breakfast?**

Frosted Flakes

- **I told Santa to bring my mom patience.**

He said that's not in stock.

- **Why does Santa bring socks?**

Doesn't he know we have Amazon?

- **How much did Santa pay for his sleigh?**

Nothing, it was "on the house"!

Funny Excuses to Skip a Family Gathering

Short comic reading segment of lighthearted “reasons” to stay home.

- “I tried a new recipe and may or may not have invented fire again.”
- “My therapist said to avoid stress, so...here we are.”
- “My holiday budget doesn't include gas money or small talk.”
- "My emotional support blanket isn't travel-size."
- "I'm in a committed relationship with my couch this weekend."
- "The weather app said there's a 100% chance of awkward questions about my life choices."

Funny Excuses to Skip a Family Gathering

- "My New Year's resolution is starting early: boundaries."
- "I'm practicing self-care, which today means avoiding Aunt Linda's opinions."
- "My holiday spirit got stuck in traffic. It'll arrive sometime in February."
- "My immune system isn't strong enough to fight off that much passive aggression."
- "I can't handle another debate about whether Die Hard is a Christmas movie or not."
- "I need to stay home and mentally prepare for the 47 versions of the same story I'll hear next time."

Silly Gift Ideas

Fun, inexpensive gifts that make adult learners or instructors smile

- **Closing Survival Kit mini bag** - include a mint, aspirin, chocolate, and mini alcohol bottles with a tag: *"For when you deal almost falls apart"*
- **Tiny notebook** labeled *"Clients/Student Quotes I Can't Post on Facebook."*
- **Mini coffee packets or K-cups tied with a ribbon** - tag: *"Because adulting is hard....and so is Real Estate & Real Estate Education."*
- **Mini rubber duck with sunglasses** - tag: *"You quack me up! Thanks for floating through this class with me."*
- **Highlighter set** - tag: *"You're the highlight of my class!"*

Silly Gift Ideas

- **Rubber Chicken Keychain** - *because no one expects it, and that's the whole point.*
- **Pack of Lifesavers Candy** - tag: *"Thanks for saving the deal!"*
- **Tiny Mirror** - tag: *"Look at that licensed legend!"*
- **Small packs of good chocolate or snack mixes labeled** *"Professional Development Fuel"*.
- **Mini desk plants or seed packets:** *"Thanks for helping learners grow."*
- **Stickers or buttons with lines like** *"Teach. Sleep. Repeat."* **or** *"Adult Learner in Progress."*

Gift Ads for the Holiday Season

Based on real and funny, hard to believe holiday ads.

- **“Nothing says I love you like a new vacuum.”**

From a 1950’s Hoover holiday campaign

- **“Celebrate the season with 25% off our funeral packages!”**

Funeral home ad that missed the “Merry” memo

- **“Nothing says appreciation like a dry-erase marker 3-pack.”**

Stationery store ran this campaign in 2012

- **The KFC Fire log**

A Yule log that makes your house smell like Kentucky Fried Chicken.

- **“Give the Gift of Meat” — Arby’s, Omaha Steaks, Hickory Farms**

Nothing says Christmas like handing someone a box of refrigerated beef.

Gift Ads for the Holiday Season

- **Bacon-scented wrapping paper.**

Yes, someone thought your Christmas tree needed to smell like a diner at 6 a.m.

- **Nicolas Cage sequin pillow.**

Brush it one way: shiny silver. Brush it the other way: Nicolas Cage staring into your soul. creepy but real.

- **A Tortilla Blanket.**

Wrap yourself up like a human burrito. Because nothing says holiday spirit like becoming your own lunch.

- **A screaming goat figurine.**

Press the button and it screams. That's it. That's the whole gift. And yes — people buy this on purpose.

- **A Bigfoot Air Freshener.**

Fresh pine scent with a hint of “mystery creature who lives behind your shed.”

Gift Ads for the Holiday Season

- **A shower wine glass holder**

For the person who thinks self-care means drinking Merlot while shampooing. Shockingly real. Worryingly popular.

- **Kool-Aid-Scented Holiday Socks**

So your feet can smell like cherry Kool-Aid.

- **Mac & Cheese-Flavored Candy Canes**

The culinary crossover literally nobody asked for.

- **A Wine-Dispensing Christmas Ornament**

This hangs on your tree and holds alcohol. Classy chaos.

- **A Custom Bobblehead That Looks Uncomfortably Accurate**

“The only gift that says I see you” and I see all your weird facial expressions.

- **A Giant 5-Pound Gummy Bear**

Because what kid wouldn't want one?!?!?

Surprisingly Real Hacks

Funny “that can’t be real — but it is!” tips

- Use a lint roller to clean up stray sprinkles from decorating.

Real! Try it, it’s amazing!

- Clean rust off metal with ketchup.

True! Yes, ketchup actually works—the mild acid in tomatoes and vinegar can lift surface rust if you let it sit for a bit before wiping.

- Use dental floss cake cutter.

Real! Wish I knew this year’s ago!

- Use mayonnaise to remove stickers, crayon, AND water rings.

True! Mayonnaise’s natural oils seep in and loosen adhesives, wax, and those dreaded cloudy rings.

Surprisingly Real Hacks

- **Aluminum foil polishes silver instantly.**

True! Combine aluminum foil, baking soda, and hot water to create a chemical reaction that lifts tarnish right off silver.

- **If you don't like washing your blue jeans, you can freeze your jeans instead of washing them.**

True! Freezing kills odor-causing bacteria, preserving the denim's color and shape.

- **Store your bread loaf upside down to keep it fresher.**

Fake! Bread stales from air exposure, not gravity. Turning it upside down is just interior decorating, not preservation.

- **Rub avocado skins on stainless steel to make it look like new.**

Fake! Avocado oil just smears and attracts dust—your appliances will look like they lost a greased-up wrestling match.

Short-on-Time Holiday Hacks

Short-on-Time Holiday & Party Hacks

- **Have guests bring desserts**

Will save you time and you know they will eat it!

- **Table runner**

Use a roll of wrapping paper as your table runner - cut to length, looks designer, toss after!

- **Instant centerpiece**

Fill a glass bowl or dish with ornaments, cranberries, or pinecones - done in 60 seconds.

- **Set up a tiny self-serve drink or cocoa bar with mugs**

Add toppings so guests do the work while feeling pampered.

- **Create a tiny “photo corner”**

With one piece of wrapping paper taped to the wall and call it the “holiday backdrop.”

Short-on-Time Holiday Hacks

- **Toss festive kitchen towels or napkins into a basket**
and call it your “holiday linen bar.”
- **Wrap gifts in plain white paper and let kids decorate them with markers.**
- **Print last-minute gift tags on mailing labels.**
- **Keep a stash of \$10 gift cards in your purse for emergency gifts.**

All Holiday Hacks in this book were provided by members of our



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