

BBC Learning English

People and Places

Talking about Christmas



Amber: Hello! Today, we talk about Christmas. Some of the team here at BBC Learning English have been out of the office to talk to young people about their feelings at Christmas time and to ask for a very short list of words to describe Christmas! So we'll hear a lot of talk about happiness and togetherness, as well as snow and food...

Two of the people we'll hear first are from Ireland where Christmas is 'very much a country-wide celebration' – it's celebrated all over the country. And it makes them think of 'holidays' and going 'back home' to see family. It's also a time of 'community' – a time for getting together with neighbours (people who live near you, in the neighbourhood), perhaps in the local pub.

As you listen, try to catch as many words as you can which the speakers use to describe their feelings at Christmas time – especially if they are words which ring true for you, if they are words which describe your feelings too!

Vox pop

I suppose Christmas is a time where I feel 'hopeful' for what lies ahead; feel 'thankful' for what I have both materially received and also for the good times that we've had; and then 'joyous' I suppose, as well, because it's – I'm from Ireland as well as you can probably tell from the accent! – so it's very much a country-wide celebration. So yeah, that would be it – 'joyous', 'hopeful' and 'thankful', I suppose.

'Relaxed', 'happy', 'fat'!

'Happy', 'excited', 'nervous'!

Three words to describe Christmas I suppose is 'family' first of all; 'holidays', going back home, obviously I'm in university over here in England but I'm from Ireland so go back home and thirdly, I suppose, 'community', getting together usually at home, in the pub with friends

from around the neighbourhood and that sort of thing, so those are the three words that describe Christmas.

Amber: So, for our speakers, Christmas is a time when they have hope (they're 'hopeful'), when they feel pleased or grateful for what they have (they feel 'thankful') – and not just for material things, and it's a time for feeling very happy, full of joy, 'joyous'.

It's interesting that Christmas is also a time that can be very stressful or worrying, especially if you are entertaining a lot of people, and one speaker said she felt 'nervous' about Christmas. Another speaker feels the opposite – she feels 'relaxed' at Christmas, she feels comfortable, without worries. And Christmas can certainly make people feel 'excited' and 'fat'! There are often presents to open, people to see whom you haven't seen for ages, and plenty of good things to eat.

Vox pop

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'Happy', 'excited', 'nervous'!

Amber: Next, our speakers talk about what their ideal Christmas would be. As you'll hear, for all of them, it involves being 'homey', at home. It's a time for getting together and having a good time. There is talk of Christmas dinner – which is a traditional meal of roast turkey with roast potatoes and brussel sprouts (brussel sprouts are a green vegetable like small cabbages that are boiled)! And people often eat too much so they end up, as one speaker says, 'feeling a bit stuffed'!

But notice that most of all, a perfect Christmas seems to involve being with other people; it's a time of 'participation' – of joining in – maybe even just watching a film on television together.

Voxpop

My ideal Christmas would be at home with all my family and it would be snowing outside!

My ideal Christmas would be, I suppose, the traditional image of sitting around at home after having Christmas dinner, feeling a bit stuffed and having had a nice glass of red wine and sitting down with the rest of the family and watching, probably, a Christmas movie.

With my family around, lots of family, lots of food! Just nice and homey.

My ideal Christmas involves snow which unfortunately we don't get an awful lot of in Ireland, mostly just rain, unfortunately! My ideal Christmas really is one of participation, where everybody gets together, as the previous speaker said, and having a good time, I suppose.

Amber: From all of us here at BBC Learning English, we wish you good health and happiness.