

ADVENT CALENDAR TOOLKIT

Transform Your December!



We're going to make a fun "Advent Calendar" to countdown to Christmas in a way that keeps mama and the whole family both energized, nurtured and calm for the month of December.

This Advent calendar will have one thought for each day, with a fun activity, a moment of downtime, or an opportunity. Your calendar is custom-made to how your family celebrates the season. It can be a countdown toward anything — Christmas, another religious celebration, the Winter Solstice, the end of the year. This take on the holiday countdown provides a healthy rhythm that supports you and your family through a season that can often be hectic and exhausting!

You are literally creating a path to an amazing New Year!!!

Step 1:

Define how you
want to feel this
December?

How do you want to feel personally and as a family this December? Do you want to find ease? Do you want to feel joy? Do you want to experience connection? Quiet? Abundance? Try to think of one word. Write it below.

Step 2: Get Clear

Write down everything you need to get done in December. Examples might include: buy a tree, get teachers presents, cook the holiday meal, get a haircut, finish your work project (or 5). Set a timer and write for 15 minutes. If you finish before the time ends, try to keep going. This should be a total brain dump.

Get all key dates in a calendar. Use your phone calendar, your paper planner or the calendar I made for you. Write down things like school holidays, travel days, house guest days, office parties, school events, performances etc.

Step 3:

Organize with a new lens (your word)

Move items from you brain dump to the worksheet on the following page. Activities from the four categories will get integrated into your advent calendar in the next step. Things that will benefit both you and your family will move over — getting a tree, listening to carols, or making cards for teachers. Items like buy your son a present, get your dry cleaning done, or buy napkins will not move over.*

The only rule is that what you bring over has to make you feel like the word you chose. For example, maybe you have this thing about taking the kids to the Nutcracker each year, and every year something goes wrong — the vomit bug to a snow storm — but every year you do it anyway because your parents did it for you. Now maybe this year, your word is “ease” or “love” and the Nutcracker leaves you feeling stressed out and mean, so this year, maybe you skip it and read stories while listening to the Nutcracker music. Any Qs you don’t know how to deal with? DM me on Instagram @plansimplemeals.

After you have brought everything over, circle the 4 most important things in each category. Is there anything that could be broken up into a few steps? For example, I used to wait too long to pull together teacher gifts and my kids would get all stressed out about cards and wrapping, and I started to resent needing to give teachers gifts. Then one year, we did not do teacher gifts, and I hated that more. Now I just break down the process over a few days towards the beginning of the month, and it feels so easy!

* I have created 14 Planning Sessions for all things holidays that will get you organized, simplified and feeling like you want to feel this season. The planning sessions are available at www.plansimplemeals.com/holidays

What are fun family activities you want to do (such as seeing performances, Santa, holiday lights; dinners out; ice skating; traditional family outings)?

What are the traditional activities you feel you need to do (such as presents for teachers, the office holiday party, baking cookies)?

What are some quieter activities to do as a family (such as reading by the fire, playing games, making food)?

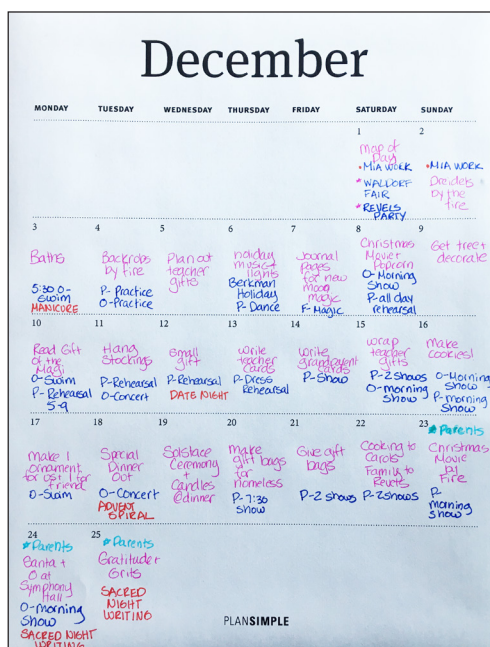
What are some ways you can give back this season?

Step 4:

Put everything on a calendar

Figure out what is going to happen each day of Advent by using the calendar on the next page. Start by writing down all date specific events that are either part of your Advent or events that you need to know to plan well.

Fill in with the things that the kids will do each day of advent that are not a date-specific event. Think about balancing the gestures of the four categories. Think about balancing rest with exertion. Make sure your self care is in there.



I went back with some color coding.

First I wrote in dark blue all the fixed events. In my case this is mostly my kids' performances, which there are many of this year. In years past, I have less "blue."

Then I went through and put self care in red, based on my kids busy schedules.

Lastly, I went through in hot pink with what was going down for advent. Days with lots of blue, are all at home reading or making things.

The turquoise shows me when my parents are in town.

December

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

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ADVENT

CALENDAR CHECKLIST

Get your calendar made and collect any items you need to pull off the 25 days...

- Choose my word.**
- Do a brain dump.**
- Get all key dates in your calendar.**
- Organize Advent in the 4 categories.**
- Put Advent activities (or non-activities) on the calendar.**
- Write the thoughts that take what I have planned and present them in a way my kids will have fun with them.**
- Gather what I need to create the actual calendar.**

THINGS I NEED TO BUY OR DO TO MAKE THE 25 DAYS WORK

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Step 5:

Write the thoughts that go into the actual Advent calendar.

Have fun writing a thought for each day based on both your plan and your word.

My word is “love” so assume that is the word for these examples.

Example #1 — There is a day when you have a work thing, someone has something after school, and you wrote down, read quietly as an activity you know both you and your kids can handle that day.

Your thought might say: “Reconnect as a family after a busy day. Snuggle up by the fire while mama reads you her favorite Christmas story.”

Example #2 — Maybe there is a day when you have something you have to do, like go to a work or school Christmas party. It would be simpler to ditch the whole thing, but you feel obligated. You remember that in years past you were always frazzled because the kids were not dressed and you were hungry.

Your thought might say: “Have a festive snack, get all ready in your party clothes, and sing carols on your way to”

This previews getting dressed and gets you fed. Assuming you like carols, you arrive happy and able to embrace love.

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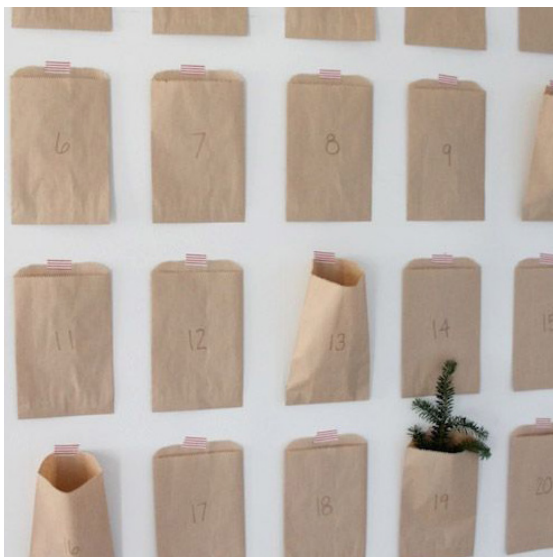
Step 6:

Make or buy a calendar to display your well-planned Advent...

Look at the samples on the following pages. A calendar can be as simple as 25 envelopes or small bags. Numbers can be created on your computer, written by hand, or stuck on with stickers that you find at a craft store. You can hang the envelopes on a wall, on a string, or simply put them in a box.

If you have run out of time or making is not up your alley, advent calendars are pretty easy to find these days at a store near you. You can go to Pottery Barn, Target, or your local craft store and find a pre made solution. It is really the well crafted plan that is going to impact your December!

We would love to see your holiday countdown ideas!!!! Make sure to post your on social media using #plansimpleholidays. We love Instagram! You can also DM us @plansimplemeals.





MIA'S 2017



STORE BOUGHT



A few extras...

Each day after your kids open the thought-of-the-day, have them write one thing they are grateful for on the envelope or a tag. You may hang them back on your calendar, so at the end of 25 days you have created something new — create a family gratitude ritual. Don't forget to join in too!

Know that as much planning as we do, some days just don't happen as planned! Have some small gifts on hand (a small soap, art supplies, chap stick), so if you have lots going on, you can replace the original activity you had planned with a note to look under the Christmas tree (or their beds or breakfast chairs) for a small gift. The exciting thing for kids is that every morning, each envelope has something to look forward to as they're counting down to the big day, and you have peace of mind knowing that you have planned for (fill in with your word).

Plan for more than the Advent calendar! What would you feel like if you made a plan for it all — gifts, food, parties, travel and more? We have 14 planning sessions in Plan Simple Holidays, and they might be just what you need! **Check out this experience here »**

