



Tips for a Magical Santa Visit

Now that Christmas is around the corner, lots of families are booking jolly ol' Saint Nick for surprise home visits.

What to Expect from Your Visit from Santa

Every home visit is different, but here are some things you might expect:

- A special entrance from Santa
- Meet and greet
- Photo opportunities
- “Chair time” when kids (and adults!) can sit with Santa individually
- Q and As with Santa
- Performances such as singing, storytelling, or reading *The Night Before Christmas*
- Handing out gifts
- A hearty goodbye and magical exit

Before Your Visit from Santa

Plan ahead and stay in touch with Santa before the day arrives so your home visit is a guaranteed success.

1. **Talk with your performer:** This isn't their first sleigh ride, and they often have a wealth of tips and ideas that can help you. Every performer approaches events differently, and you will also have special things in mind. Call them, chat, and make certain to finalize your plans before the season is too busy.
2. **Share key details about the event:** Your performer will need to know how many people will be there and their ages. Be sure to share the names of the children — Santa will do his best to remember them. You can also introduce them simply, such as, “Santa, this is Suzy, who is seven years old, and Michael just turned nine.”
3. **Inform Santa about special considerations:** Santa is happy to accommodate special needs for those he visits. He should also know about any language barriers, cultural considerations, and neurodivergent needs before arrival.
4. **Make sure Santa can get in:** If you live in a gated community or have a special entrance in mind, make sure to share access codes and directions ahead of time.

5. **Stay in communication:** Santa needs the cell phone number of someone designated to wait for his text message when he is ready to make his entrance. Your point person should ensure their phone is fully charged, keep an eye on their messages, and be prepared to help with any issues.
6. **Think about reminders of sadness or loss:** If a loved one has recently passed or someone is currently stationed overseas, it helps Santa to know to avoid touching on sensitive issues. And if someone is missing from the event, Santa could help you record a special message for them.
7. **Remember the Elves:** Does your family participate in “Elf on the Shelf”? Santa loves being “in” on this tradition! But it helps Santa to know the names of those elves and what they have been up to.

Preparing for the Day of Your Visit from Santa

There are several things to consider as you get your home ready for Santa on the day of your event.

1. **Reserve a spot for Santa's sleigh:** Parking is important, especially if it's limited (or your house is on a hill). Ask your Santa if they need a space reserved for them. One great method is to have someone park in Santa's spot, then pull the car out right before he arrives and leave a sign that says “Reserved for Santa.”
2. **Ensure that someone at the event is designated to help Santa:** Santa will reach out to the client's designee approximately 15 minutes BEFORE the start of the event. PLEASE it is important that the designee's phone number is given to Santa AND that the individual will be focused on getting Santa's call or text. The designee once the call is received, please go outside and guide Santa to parking spot and provide Santa with any presents that Santa may be distributing at the event. In the event the number of presents is going to be greater than 30 inches by 30 inches by 30 inches that Santa is notified in advance. Santa will bring in one bag and provide others to the host family to fill and put near Santa's chair while other things are going on.
3. **Prepare your seating arrangements:** After Santa makes his entrance, he should have a designated place to sit. The best kind of chair for Santa is a strong one, preferably with a straight back and without arms. Santa needs his feet flat on the floor when he has someone visiting with him. Often a dining room table chair will work just fine, and you can dress it up with a pretty Christmas blanket. Forest green or dark blue looks great in photos!
4. **Place Santa's chair:** We recommend putting Santa's chair near the Christmas tree or someplace well-lit with a festive background. Avoid putting Santa near the roaring fireplace; he's already very warm. Keeping the house a little cooler is great for Ol' St. Nick. *Avoid putting him in front of lots of glass because you'll get flash bounce and glare in your photos.* Arrange the chair so the kids can sit down in front of him.
5. **Consider background noise:** A Christmas performance is for the whole family. When the music is blaring or the crowd is loud and rowdy, some of the magic will be lost if Santa can't be heard. While Santa is there, have everybody join in and have your revelers tone it down until Santa heads for the sleigh.
6. **Have your payment ready:** If you arranged your Santa visit with a split payment (a deposit paid earlier with the remainder due at the time of the visit) or if you want to give Santa a holiday tip, the

best method is to have the payment and/or tip in a Christmas card and envelope at the front door, ready to hand to Santa when he comes in.

Note: When you book a Santa on GigSalad, you'll pay the entire balance upfront, so you don't have to worry about paying anything (except a tip, if desired) on the day of the event.

During Your Visit from Santa

Parties can always get a little hectic, so follow these tips to stay on track and keep your guests happy.

1. **Be a friendly host:** Introduce Santa to both kids and adults; Christmas is for the kid in all of us!
2. **Help Santa stay on time:** Santa may have other families to visit, so be mindful of his dedicated time with you.
3. **Assist with the details:** Understand that Santa won't be able to memorize every name. If you have a tradition, like a special cookie, nicknames, or customs, let your Santa know in advance and again at the event. Maybe remind him "of that time Santa brought something special" if this would be meaningful to the audience.
4. **Encourage participation:** Be upbeat and get everyone to join in on songs, stories, and other activities. If you show enthusiasm, others will too!
5. **Coordinate the kids:** As cute as it might be, sometimes it's best not to put all the kids together. The younger, squirmier kiddos should stay in their parent's laps. If a child is having a meltdown, have someone assigned to help them go somewhere where they can calm down.
6. **Be flexible:** Remember that all performances have unique pacing and rhythm based on your guests and home atmosphere. Be flexible and allow the timing to flow naturally.

Passing Out Gifts

Presents are the biggest part of Christmas! The big man in red is a pro at gift-giving, but there are a few things you can do to help him out.

1. **Make sure Santa can find your gifts:** Put your presents in a large plastic trash bag marked with a bright ribbon. Make sure it's easily accessible and can be lifted into Santa's bag. If there are lots of presents or they are extremely heavy, get some elf hats and have a few helpers meet Santa outside. Remember, if you cannot carry all the gifts at once, it might be hard to have Santa carry all of them at the same time, too.
2. **Don't count on labels:** Write the name clearly in large print with a marker directly onto the wrapping paper. Labels usually fall off in Santa's bag. If this is a group gathering, make certain you can distinguish between people with the same name. If the names might be challenging, have someone help Santa with the pronunciations.

3. **Have backup gifts:** If this event includes many families, have a few small backup gifts just in case someone did not get the word. Stuffed animals and gift cards work well. You could even pass them over, saying, "Oh, Santa, you dropped these."
4. **Decide how to open gifts:** Of course, you can just hand them out and open them. Little kids will often just do this anyway. But another fun way is called a "Countdown and Out." Santa hands out the presents, but everyone waits to open them until Santa is leaving. Santa starts the countdown, saying, "5, 4, 3, 2, 1... Merry Christmas!" Then the paper flies! The advantage is that Santa leaves at a high point, and no one tries to follow him out to see the reindeer. In fact, assign someone to make sure the kids don't follow him outside.

Taking Photos with Santa

Meeting Santa always needs photographic evidence, so be sure you're ready for this important task. Don't want the pressure on you? Hire a photographer instead!

1. **Charge your batteries:** Have all your cameras and smartphones ready, fully charged, connected to Wi-Fi, and prepared before the event begins.
2. **Take photos first:** Try to get the photos done early in the event. For small infants, have someone ready to take the picture with Santa. A parent should hand the child to Santa and maintain eye contact and slowly back away. Take the photo as quickly as possible just in case there is a meltdown. You'll have time to get everything you want and folks are still fresh with the wonder of the visit. Then you can relax and just visit!
3. **Photos with children and infants:** Please have wipes or towelettes available to ensure that children do not have sticky hands or soiled clothes. Santa will have a towel to place on his lap if necessary. Also, please ensure that infants do not have soiled diapers. If the infant is really small, a burp cloth is appreciated.
4. **Photos with pets:** Santa is usually good with animals, but there should be a lap blanket and plenty of advanced notice if you want photos with pets. If Santa has to visit someone else that day who is allergic to pets, he might not be able to hold your furry friend for the photo. Instead, he will ask you to hold them and stand or sit nearby. Also please have a lint roller for Santa to use in the event that hair does transfer to Santa's wardrobe.

Santa Reminders

- Santa is not likely to tell children they are on the naughty list, even if you ask him to.
- Santa is not likely to eat or drink beyond a few nibbles or sips. A bottle of water is always welcome. White gloves stain easily, and it can be difficult to keep a beard pristine.
- Santa will not accept any drink that is alcoholic. Remember, he has to drive the sleigh.

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