

HOLIDAY BREAK SUPPORT GUIDE FOR FAMILIES



Wraparound Experts – Special Education & Mental Health Support
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PROTECT THE SLEEP SCHEDULE



● Prepare Your Environment

- Dim Lighting
- Avoid Screens
- Reduce Noise
- Limit Sugar
- End Rough/Active Play

● Follow a Consistent Routine

- Choose 3-4 activities to complete in the same sequence each night
 - Examples:
 - Nutritious snack or bottle/breastfeeding
 - Shower, bath or diaper change
 - Brushing teeth and going to the bathroom
 - Reading a book
 - Lullaby or singing a song together
 - Massage, cuddling, or rocking
 - Talking about their day
- Consistent End
 - Good-night kiss, lights out
 - Leave while tired, but not yet asleep

● Morning Wake Time

- Allow sleeping-in during the majority of holiday break
- About 3 days before school resumes, bump wake-up time earlier in 30–45-minute increments

● Patience is Key

- Expect pushback and protests
 - Troubleshooting: Give controlled choices to maintain a sense of autonomy (ex: Take bath or brush teeth first?)
- By following through and remaining consistent, you will start to see the benefits of healthy sleep routines- even during holiday schedule changes!

KEEP BRAINS ACTIVE (BUT MAKE IT FUN)



Cookie Shop Role Play

Targets: Following directions, sequencing, articulation in context (SLP), bilateral coordination, fine motor (OT), Math

- 1- to 2-step directions first → build to 3-step (e.g., “Open the sprinkles, put on two shakes, then close the lid”)
- Use cookie cutters to strengthen hands and work on spatial concepts: “Press in the middle, move to the edge”
- Practice sound targets during orders: “I need two red cookies,” “More sprinkles!”
- Use tongs to transfer cookies to the cooling area → strengthens hand muscles for pencil grasp!
- Use measuring cups/spoons to work on fractions and counting

Holiday Scavenger Hunt

Targets: Executive function, sensory regulation (OT); inferencing and descriptive language (SLP)

- Use clues based on features:
 - Instead of saying “Find the tree,” try...“Find something tall, green, and decorated that smells like pine!”
 - “Find something soft and shaped like a circle that rings!”
- Level-up: Use “first...then...” clues to add sequencing and self-management.

Ornament Obstacle Course

Targets: Balance, motor planning, body awareness (OT); prepositions and spatial language (SLP)

- Set up: Pillows = mountains, tape = paths, chair = tunnel
- Child must pick up ornaments and carry them through the obstacles:
 - “Crawl under the chair”
 - “Balance the ornament on top of your hand”
 - “Walk between the pillows”
- Level-up: Use a timer to encourage regulation + pacing

Holiday Reading, Writing & Scissor Skills

- Read Christmas books together (act out scenes, pair with craft, themed snack, or corresponding movie)
- Practice writing wish lists and “thank you” cards to Santa or family members
- Practice writing out hot chocolate bar recipe, then follow it to make a cup
- Grab a plate filled with shaving cream and practice writing letters in the “snow” with pointer finger
- Cut snowflake patterns (with or without a visual model), decorate, and hang somewhere “fancy” to increase motivation

BUILD IN EMOTIONAL BREAKS & REGULATION MOMENTS

For Extra Wiggles

- Movement breaks every 20–40 minutes → “Decorate the tree with your muscles” → lifting, carrying, climbing
- Offer safe alternatives: crash pad, trampoline, jumping onto couch cushions
- Chair push-ups, wall sits, animal walks down hallways
- Wrap them like a present (pressure input) then “break free!”
- Snowball toss with rolled-up socks → motor planning + hand-eye control
- Heavy-work snack tasks: stirring, kneading dough, carrying items (ex: flour bag)

For Overstimulation

- One “calm break” every 2–3 hours (set a gentle visual timer)
- A quiet “reset corner” with pillows, noise-canceling headphones, books, and soft lighting
- Create a Signal: child picks a hand sign or card to request a break without using words
- Pack a mini sensory kit: chew necklace, fidget tool, sunglasses, crunchy snacks
- Slow, deep breathing using bubbles or pinwheels (“blow the snowflakes away!”)
- Move the child to a side chair or wall-facing seat → reduces visual input
- Quiet earbud with calming playlist or white noise
- Play “I Spy Calm Things” to redirect attention to grounding details
- Ask for a short job: “Can you help me carry the napkins?” → purposeful movement is regulating

For Big Emotions

- Preview the day each morning with a quick visual schedule (drawn on a sticky note!)
- Predictable **anchor moments** each day (same breakfast spot, same bedtime routine)
- Countdowns for transitions: “In 5 minutes, we’re leaving Grandma’s”
- “Flex plan” options: “We’ll open gifts at 3... OR after the movie if we need more time”
- Teach simple scripts for communication:
 - “I need space.”
 - “I’m not ready yet.”
 - “Can someone come with me?”

Reminder  Kids with ADHD or anxiety especially benefit from planned downtime.
A regulated brain = a connected holiday.