

Hardy Hints for Families visiting Santa

By National Santa, Tim Connaghan

Make it a fun activity – It should be like going to Disneyland. Dress comfortably. When getting your children ready, try to make this a fun activity. If they are having fun, the photos will be more natural and much better. When dressing your children, don't force them to wear something they don't like. This will just put them in a bad mood and it will show in your photo.

Give yourself plenty of time. Trying to rush creates tension and leads to stress. Set aside an entire morning or afternoon to make your trip to Santa, and maybe do some family shopping or sightseeing.

Prepare your children - Make sure they are ready to visit Santa. A visit with Santa Claus can be quite scary for a small child.

- In preparation of going to see Santa Claus, read some books to your child about Santa. Let them see pictures of Santa, or watch a cartoon about Santa and his Reindeer.
- Before taking your child to the line, let them observe how other kids are standing in line waiting to sit on Santa Claus' lap.
- When it is time for pictures with Santa Claus, if your child is too scared, consider doing a group photo with you holding your child or have your child stand next to Santa Claus.

Talk to your children about the spirit of giving.

- Children may spend hours, days, even weeks thinking about what they want for Christmas, and what they will tell Santa when they see him.
- While driving to see Santa, or waiting in line, talk to you children about what Santa means. Simply stated, Santa represents, love, joy and giving.
- Whether you are Christian or not, you can explain to your children that Christmas is not, just a time for getting, it's also a time for giving. Sometimes, it's a time for secret giving.
- Ask them if they know someone they should give to. Would they like to give something secretly?

Before you leave the house, Santa recommends that you bring along a comb or brush; hairspray; moist towelettes; and pins or barrettes for long hair. Kids can surprise all of us.

The best photos are taken in the first fifteen seconds. And with babies, sometimes the first five seconds! Help seat your children and then quickly back out of the photo area. After the photo or photos are taken, your children can talk with Santa.

If you have a newborn to six-month-old baby, you should take the baby up to Santa. If there are other children, seat them first. Then personally give the baby to Santa last. Move to the side and let the photographer take the photos. After the photo is taken, you can remove the baby and Santa can talk with the other children.

If your child is afraid of Santa, never force them to sit on Santa's lap. This can be a very traumatic experience. Often the Santa and photographer will have some techniques to help get a good photo.

If your child has a wet bottom, let Santa and his helpers know. If Santa's suit gets wet or soiled, everything must stop while he changes or cleans up. Ask Santa's helper if you can pass on your photo until your child is changed. They should give you the OK to come back to the front of the line.