



Multi-Day Observances in December

The popular English carol “[Twelve Days of Christmas](#)” is more than just a catchy holiday song. According to the Christianity.com article, “[The 12 Days of Christmas Lyrics and Meaning of Each Gift](#),” many denominations celebrated the holiday for 12 days, and the seemingly unusual gifts in the song were religious symbols or codes used for Christians who were not allowed to worship and celebrate freely. While Christmas today is usually celebrated only one day, December offers other multi-day observances of social, religious, and cultural significance.

Human Rights Week: People worldwide observe Human Rights Week in early December, and this year marks the 75th anniversary of the signing of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) on December 10, 1948.

- [Human Rights Week](#) is celebrated with events promoting education and awareness of human rights issues. Check How to [Celebrate Human Rights Day in 10 Ways](#) for event ideas to plan or incorporate into existing programs. Ideas can include curating an art exhibit, hosting a virtual conference, and rewarding Human Rights advocates in the local community.
- As explained in this [Human Rights Week](#) 2021 video, the international focus on Human Rights sparked other declarations and conventions for the rights of children, women, the LGBTQ+ community, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities.
- The observance of Human Rights Week is also a good time to reflect on past human rights achievements and learn ways to further human rights work. One way to do this is to learn more about career and training opportunities in Human Rights by searching [Human Rights Careers](#). The resource offers information about internships, fellowships, certificate programs, and degrees that advance work in the field.

Hannukah: This year, Hannukah (also spelled Chanukah) begins at sunset on December 18 and ends at nightfall on December 26. The observance is considered a minor Jewish holiday commemorating the temple’s rededication in Jerusalem.

- Watch this video, [Hannukah: The Basics](#), by the Everyday Jewish Mom, who explains the meaning of the observance, how it is celebrated, and the types of foods eaten.
- This data visualization, [What is Chanukah?](#), from the Jewish Community Center of Louisville, describes the different symbols and traditions, including the menorah, dreidels, and the calendar.
- The Menorah is the most recognizable symbol of Hannukah. The menorah holds eight candles representing the Festival of Lights to commemorate the miracle of the oil in which a supply meant for night lasted eight nights. While menorahs are both functional and ceremonial, they can be ornate and decorative. View several examples in this collection from [The Jewish Museum](#) in New York.

- The Jewish community website, chabad.org, presents a collection of Chanukah stories written and submitted by individuals around the world. These “stories that illuminate our lives,” according to the site, can be read at [Chanukah Stories - Tales of Light - Chabad.org](#).

Kwanzaa: Kwanzaa, an African American cultural celebration created by activist and Africana Studies Professor [Maulana Karenga](#) in 1966, is observed annually from December 26-January 1.

- Kwanzaa is a Swahili term meaning first fruits. The celebration centers on the following seven principles: Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith). For a brief history of this cultural celebration, view [A Brief History of the Kwanzaa Holiday and Six Amazing Facts](#).
- The National Museum of African American History and Culture offers resources to learn more about [Kwanzaa | National Museum of African American History and Culture \(si.edu\)](#), including the rituals for each day of the celebration.
- For ideas on celebrating Kwanzaa in family, education, or community settings, check out [Kwanzaa Traditions and Activities for Holiday Celebrating | LoveToKnow](#).
- After learning about Kwanzaa, test your knowledge of the seven principles by matching each with its definition in this [infographic](#).

Whether you spend part of the month engaging in observances that are religious, cultural, or social, all have elements of peace, respect for humanity, and kindness. And if your celebration includes gift-giving, try not to wait until the last minute, as December is also [Procrastination Month](#).

May we avoid blaming or bias based on our circumstances and continue to be grateful for the gifts of the global community.

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December 2022