

Project: The Ultimate Holiday Guide

A One-Week, Hands-On Holiday Unit for a 17-Year-Old Student

Focus: This project-based unit is designed to accommodate dyslexia and dysgraphia by emphasizing hands-on activities, verbal communication, and digital creation over traditional written reports. The final goal is to create a fun, multimedia "Holiday Guide" in a format of the student's choosing (e.g., a short documentary video, a podcast episode, a narrated photo slideshow, or a visual digital magazine).

Materials Needed:

- An "Elf on the Shelf" (or any fun character to act as the "Project Manager")
 - Computer or tablet with internet access
 - Smartphone with camera/video capabilities
 - Assistive Technology: Access to speech-to-text and text-to-speech software (most devices have this built-in)
 - Kitchen supplies for baking (flour, sugar, eggs, etc., based on chosen recipes)
 - Craft supplies (construction paper, tape, scissors, ribbon, cardboard boxes)
 - A few small gifts for wrapping practice
 - Ingredients for a science experiment (e.g., candy canes, vinegar, baking soda)
 - Headphones with a microphone (for recording audio)
 - Access to free digital tools like Canva (for design), Audacity (for audio), or a simple video editor (like CapCut or iMovie)
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Day 1: Project Kick-off & Planning

The Elf on the Shelf arrives with a note that outlines the week's mission.

Elf's Mission Note (Read Aloud): "Greetings! I've been sent on a special mission. My alien friend, Zorp, has never experienced a holiday season and is completely confused. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to create the **Ultimate Holiday Guide** to explain it all! Each day, I'll leave you a task to help you gather research. By Friday, you will present your guide to me so I can send it to Zorp. Good luck!"

Language Arts & Life Skills: Brainstorming & The Bucket List

- **Activity:** Holiday Bucket List Brainstorm. Instead of writing a list, create a visual mind map or a digital board (like Trello or Pinterest). Use images and single words to represent ideas.
- **Task:** Verbally discuss and brainstorm all the things that make up the holiday season for you. Think about traditions, food, music, movies, activities, feelings. Use speech-to-text to capture ideas if helpful.
- **Goal:** Select 3-5 activities from this list to complete during the week. This is your project's "To-Do" list!

Math: Holiday Budgeting

- **Activity:** Create a Project Budget.
 - **Task:** Open a simple spreadsheet (Google Sheets or Excel). Let's say you have a hypothetical budget of \$100 for the week's activities (baking, crafts, a small gift). List the items on your bucket list that will have a cost. Research approximate prices online and enter them into the
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spreadsheet. Use the `SUM` formula to see if you are on budget.

- **Dysgraphia-Friendly:** This task uses typing and numbers, avoiding handwriting. Focus on the logic of budgeting, not perfect spelling.

Evening Activity: Bucket List Item #1

- **Task:** Choose one simple activity from your bucket list to do tonight, like watching a favorite holiday movie or listening to a holiday music playlist while drinking hot chocolate.
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Day 2: A Deep Dive into Traditions

The Elf is found near a globe or map with a note: "Zorp wonders if everyone celebrates the same way. Show him some different traditions!"

Social Studies & History: Traditions Around the World

- **Activity:** Research a Holiday Tradition.
- **Task:** Choose two different countries and research one of their major winter holiday traditions (e.g., Krampus in Austria, St. Lucia's Day in Sweden, Giant Lantern Festival in the Philippines). Watch short videos or listen to podcasts about them.
- **Output:** Instead of writing a report, open a voice memo app and record yourself explaining the two traditions, comparing and contrasting them as if you were explaining it to Zorp.

Science & Culinary Arts: The Chemistry of Cookies

- **Activity:** Bake a Holiday Treat.
 - **Task:** Choose a recipe connected to a family or cultural tradition. Before you start, discuss the science behind it. Why does baking soda make cookies rise? (Acid-base reaction creating CO₂ gas). What is the Maillard reaction? (What makes baked goods turn brown and taste amazing).
 - **Math Application:** Double or halve the recipe. This requires recalculating fractions and measurements, a practical math skill.
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Day 3: The Art & Science of Giving

The Elf is tangled in wrapping paper and ribbon. Note: "Zorp doesn't understand presents. What is this colorful paper for? And why are some things fizzy?"

Art & Math: The Geometry of Gift Wrapping

- **Activity:** Gift Wrapping Challenge.
- **Task:** Find a few boxes of different shapes (cuboid, cylinder if you have one). Your challenge is to wrap them using the least amount of paper possible. This is a real-world geometry problem! Discuss concepts like surface area. Try a difficult wrapping technique you find online, like the Japanese diagonal wrapping method.
- **Creative Outlet:** Create your own wrapping paper by stamping designs on plain paper or a paper bag.

Science: Fizzy Fun Experiment

- **Activity:** Candy Cane Science.
 - **Task:** A simple, visual experiment. Place candy canes in separate glasses of different liquids: cold water, hot water, vinegar, and oil. Make a verbal prediction (hypothesis) about what will
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happen in each. Observe for 30 minutes and record your findings by taking pictures and narrating the results. (Spoiler: Vinegar and hot water will dissolve it fastest!). This demonstrates solubility and chemical reactions.

Day 4: Production Day!

The Elf is sitting by the computer with a microphone and camera. Note: "It's time to put it all together! Make the guide! Zorp is waiting!"

Language Arts & Technology: Creating the Holiday Guide

- **Activity:** Produce your multimedia project.
 - **Task:** Using the research, photos, and experiences from the week, create your guide. Choose ONE format:
 - **Video Documentary:** Film short clips explaining each element (traditions, baking, wrapping). Use a simple video editor to add music and voiceover.
 - **Podcast Episode:** Write a simple script (or just bullet points) and record an audio guide. You can include sound effects and music.
 - **Digital Magazine:** Use a tool like Canva to create a highly visual guide with photos you took during the week. Use large, dyslexic-friendly fonts and add short audio clips or links to videos.
 - **Support:** Focus on clear communication, not perfect spelling or grammar. Use spell-check and grammar tools, but the main goal is creative expression of the knowledge gained.
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Day 5: Showcase & Celebration

The Elf is sitting in a "director's chair" (made of LEGOs or blocks) in front of the computer screen. Note: "Showtime! Present your guide. I've also left a final bucket list challenge for us!"

Presentation & Reflection: The Premiere

- **Activity:** Present the "Ultimate Holiday Guide."
 - **Task:** Share your finished project. After watching/listening, discuss the process. What was the most fun part? What was challenging? What did you learn that you didn't know before? This verbal reflection is a key part of the learning process.

Life Skills & Fun: Final Bucket List Activity

- **Activity:** Complete a final, celebratory bucket list item.
- **Task:** Choose a fun activity to wrap up the week. Maybe it's building a gingerbread house, going to see holiday lights, or volunteering to wrap gifts for a local charity. This connects the learning to a real-world, enjoyable experience.

Math: Final Budget Review

- **Activity:** Review the budget.
 - **Task:** Go back to your Day 1 spreadsheet. Enter the actual costs of your activities. Were you over or under budget? By how much? This closes the loop on the practical math lesson.
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