

## Kwanzaa: Seven Days of Celebration

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The holiday season is quickly approaching and that means that it is almost time for the seven days of Kwanzaa to begin. Starting on December 26 and ending January 1, each day of Kwanzaa focuses on one of the seven principles that encompasses the Kwanzaa spirit.

The seven principles of Kwanzaa include umoja, kujichagulia, ujima, ujamaa, nia, kuumba, and imani. Unity, self-determination, creativity and building traditions and community are the basic principles that are celebrated during the Kwanzaa holiday.



Planning a party that follows the basic principles of Kwanzaa takes self-determination, creativity and a desire to build traditions and community, the very principles you are trying to celebrate.

The Kwanzaa holiday utilizes the colors black, red and green as the dominant colors to decorate with. Maps of Africa, the Kwanzaa flag, African prints and objects of art can all be used to decorate for a Kwanzaa party. Balloons and streamers in red, black and green will create a festive atmosphere for your Kwanzaa celebration.

As you decorate for your Kwanzaa party, don't forget the mkeka. The mkeka is a straw mat that is decorated with the seven symbols of the Kwanzaa holiday and the mkeka is used as the focal point of a Kwanzaa party room.

Gathering friends and family together in the spirit of inclusion and unity is one of the main purposes of celebrating Kwanzaa. Finding activities that all guests can enjoy together is a great way to foster creativity and togetherness. Some activities can include craft making such as beading jewelry, carving figurines or making them out of clay, and making a mosaic wall of

family photographs that guests bring to your party.

One game often played at Kwanzaa celebrations is called Mamba. Mamba is particularly enjoyed by children, but children young and old can join in the fun. To play Mamba, mark off an area to create a pen about 15 by 15 feet square. One person is the Mamba and tries to capture players who must remain in the pen area and try not to get caught. Once caught by the Mamba the player must become part of the Mamba by holding onto the waist of the person at the end of the Mamba, forming a snake. Only the Mamba, who acts as the head of the snake, can capture victims. Once all of the victims have been captured by the Mamba, the game is over.

A different game you can also play at your Kwanzaa celebration is called Earth, Air, Water and Fire, which are the four elements. The group sits in a large circle. The game starts when one player tosses a tennis ball randomly to another player and yells out one of the four elements. Whoever catches the ball has ten seconds to name an animal of the element. If fire is yelled, the catcher does not say anything.

Animals of the earth are animals that walk on the ground, animals of the air are ones that fly and animals of the water are marine animals. If a player can't name an animal or says one that has already been used, they are out. The game is played until only one player is left.

Kwanzaa celebrations would not be complete without food. African or Caribbean foods are the staples of a Kwanzaa feast. Jerk meats, sweet potatoes, beans and rice, black-eyed peas and okra are some foods that are used to create Kwanzaa dishes.

With African food, games and Kwanzaa decorations, you are ready to celebrate Kwanzaa. Gather your friends and family together, enjoy spending time together and share in the love and unity that the Kwanzaa spirit emulates.

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