

There are some important things to keep in mind if you're going to have an Elf on the Shelf in your house.

(1) Elf arrival:

Choose when you want the elf to "arrive". December 1st is a common starting day. December 1st isn't a rule but keep in mind that every day the elf is at your house that's one more thing for you to do. The elf has to be moved every night.

(2) What does the elf do:

The elf's job is to watch children and fly to the North Pole each night to report back to Santa to help with his naughty and nice list. When they arrive back at your home they land in a different spot. Often with cute tricks or notes. This is why you have to move it every night.

(3) Elf Magic:

Maintaining elf magic is important to the illusion. Elves get their magic once they're named. They need their magic to fly back to the North Pole each night. If you touch the elf it loses its magic. That means children can't see or know that you are moving the elf. Telling them the elf can't return to Santa until they're asleep might help with bedtime routines.

This does complicate what you can do with the elf. There are lots of funny ideas out there but they aren't practical.

Having the elf inside your bathroom sink taking a bath in marshmallow bubbles is adorable but that means that sink can't be used the entire day because no one can move the elf. If the elf is strapped in

to a car seat or seat belt, you can't use that.

If a child touches the elf, you have to have a way for the elf to regain their magic. Ideas include writing an apology letter to Santa or using sprinkles as magic recovery dust. Having this decided in advance will prevent you being caught off guard if your child asks questions about touching the elf.

(4) Moving The Elf:

Personally, I feel like December is a whirlwind of activities and things you have to do. Parties, cards, shopping, wrapping, etc. I think making a list in advance of what you'll do with the elf for each day can make it easier. That way you don't have to scramble for ideas at

the last minute. If you're going to use special props, I'd gather them and stash them in advance. For the first year you may want to keep it simple.

(5) I Forgot To Move The Elf:

I think this happens to pretty much everyone. You're tired and there's so much going on. Setting reminder alarms on your phone can help. Have a plan to explain why the elf didn't move. Stuff like he overslept, she didn't feel well and needed a night off from flying, he wanted to see if you'd notice he was in the same spot, etc. Whatever you think your child will believe.

(6) Elf Departure:

When the elf leaves on Christmas Eve it stays at the North Pole until it returns the

following year. That means you have to have a place to keep it hidden for the year planned in advance. Leaving a note or letter saying goodbye is common.

(7) Remember:

This is supposed to be fun for children. It's more work for you but seeing children light up from the magic of Christmas traditions is part of the joy of the season. Have fun with it.

