

Experience Kwanzaa



Kwanzaa is a holiday that celebrates African-American culture. Kwanzaa lasts for seven days; it starts on December 26th and ends on New Year's Day.

Kwanzaa History Learn the origin and tradition behind the celebration of Kwanzaa. [History](#)

Kwanzaa Celebration Plan a seven-day Kwanzaa celebration. Include your residents in the planning. This website is a guide for your preparation. [Celebrate](#)



Traditional African Clothing To make your Kwanzaa celebration special, have your residents wear traditional African clothing. If you have creative residents or staff, make dashikis or find colorful fabric and tie African-style head wraps. [Dashiki pattern](#) [How to tie a scarf](#)

Musical Guests Check your community resources and locate a musical group that specializes in African music. Invite them to perform for your residents. As an added bonus, they can share information about their unique instruments. If you have access to African musical instruments, give your residents an opportunity to create their own music.



Candle Making Red, black, and green candles are an important part of the Kwanzaa celebration. Make it even more special by having your residents create the candles for the Kinara. [Dip candles](#)

African Art Create an African art gallery in your community. Display original or reproductions of African Art. Your local library or museum could be resources for finding art. Perhaps your residents can create their own artwork for display.



Fruit The name Kwanzaa comes from the Swahili phrase, "matunda ya kwanza," which means "first fruits of the harvest." Have a fruit tasting event for your residents. Try to locate interesting and exotic fruits.

Scrapbook Family and community are important fundamentals of Kwanzaa. Put together a scrapbook of photos and special mementos from the past year to share during the Kwanzaa celebration.



Kwanzaa Display Set up a Kwanzaa display with the seven symbols of Kwanzaa. Discuss the meaning of each symbol with your residents and visitors.

Swahili Celebrate Kwanzaa and African culture by learning the origin of Swahili. Choose a few positive or inspirational Swahili phrases to share with your residents during Kwanzaa or have fun translating words and phrases from English to Swahili. [Origin of Swahili English to Swahili](#)



Mancala Host a Mancala tournament for residents and their guests. Mancala, an African strategy game, is easy to learn and fun to play. Purchase inexpensive Mancala sets or your residents can make their own sets using craft stones and egg cartons.





Sankofa The Swahili Sankofa embodies three concepts: honoring the past, finding one's purpose in the present, and discovering one's destiny. The Sankofa can be used to set goals for the coming year. Introduce your residents to this beneficial Swahili practice. Give your residents a piece of paper with a large Sankofa. Have your residents write their most important goal or intention in the middle of the heart. Around the outside of the heart, have them write the effects of following this goal or intention.



Family History Book Family history is an important aspect of Kwanzaa. Create a history book for your community. Have each resident contribute a page of their family history. This is an excellent opportunity to include family members. It could also be a multigenerational activity by having students interview the residents and create the pages for them.

Dance Invite a dance teacher to your facility to introduce your residents to African dance for fun and exercise.



Karamu Feast The sixth day of Kwanzaa occurs on New Year's Eve. This is the day of the Kwanzaa Karamu, or feast. Have cooking classes featuring popular African recipes or invite family and friends to join the residents for a feast consisting of traditional African foods.

- [Kwanzaa Potatoes](#)
- [Gages](#)
- [Kwanzaa Stew](#)
- [African Peanut Soup](#)
- [Corn and Okra Skillet](#)
- [Benne Cake](#)
- [Ambrosia](#)



Kwanzaa Crafts Creativity is one of the principles of Kwanzaa. Encourage creativity with one or more of these Kwanzaa Crafts.

- [Handprint Wreath](#)
- [Kwanzaa Unity Cup](#)
- [Kwanzaa Bag](#)
- [Kwanzaa Tablecloth](#)
- [Kwanzaa Favors](#)
- [Kwanzaa Placemat](#)
- [Ear of Corn Place cards](#)

