



SANTA SITE CONNECTS WITH KIDS

The biggest holiday in kid-dom is only 10 days away. Christmas is a special time for many, but it's really special for young children. The thought of a magical elf flying to your house in a sleigh pulled by reindeer and then coming down your chimney to leave you toys is about as good as it gets. If you have someone in your house who is still firmly in the Santa zone, emailsanta.com is a website they will enjoy.

As the URL implies, the site lets fans of the jolly old elf email him letters with their Christmas wishes. And Santa will reply to the letters right on the site. A prominent link on the home



page takes you to a pre-written letter. You can enter your own information into multiple fields on the form to customize it. There's also a box that lets you write your own personal message to him.

The site also offers other activities geared to young kids. The Naughty or Nice List features a quiz to determine your fitness to receive gifts. Kids answer a series of questions and the Elf-o-matic Naughty or

Nice Determinator gauges which list they will end up on.

A Christmas countdown clock lets kids know how long until Santa comes to town. It breaks it down into weeks, sleeps, hours, minutes and seconds. There's also a video of Santa prepping his sleigh and reindeer for the big night.

There's a Joke of the Day section with Christmas-themed humor. Parents may not find the jokes as hilarious as kids might.

A Present Counter on the homepage keeps a running tally of how many gifts the elves at the North Pole have made, tested and wrapped. A link in this section takes you to Santa's blog

which features stories about elves, lights, reindeer and other Christmas subjects.

The Toybag of Fun section has a bunch of games and activities. There are links to Christmas help lines and charities if you want to give or receive help. There's also links to Christmas webcams from around the world. You can read, listen to and watch stories, carols and videos. There are Christmas pictures, word games, party games, trivia quizzes, coloring pages, crafts and more.

The site has a bright, colorful design with fun fonts that will appeal to children. When you move the cursor around, magic dust falls from it leaving a trail.

You can turn on Christmas music at the top of the page to listen to while you browse.

I encountered numerous technical issues while browsing. Many links were fickle, either not working on the first click or taking you to an error page initially but working fine on the second try. Some of the webcams had issues with functionality. To be fair, some cameras are on other sites so EmailSanta can't be blamed for them. All things considered, the site will be enjoyed by the kids it is aimed at.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a staff artist for The Times-Tribune. Share your favorite websites and apps with him at koneill@timeshamrock.com.