

What Is The Elf On The Shelf Tradition

Unveiling the Magical World of the Elf on the Shelf: A Content Creator's Deep Dive Hey everyone! 🧝 Ever wondered about the enchanting Elf on the Shelf tradition? It's more than just a quirky holiday ritual; it's a heartwarming experience that bridges generations and sparks joy. Today, we're diving deep into the world of these tiny helpers, exploring its origins, the evolving trends, and the profound impact it can have on families. Let's uncover the secrets behind this beloved holiday custom! **The Elf on the Shelf: A History of Holiday Magic** The Elf on the Shelf tradition, although seemingly modern, has its roots in a charming story. Created by Carol Aebersold and Chanda Bell, the concept first emerged in 2005. The origin story involves a little scout elf who visits children's homes each Christmas to report back to Santa Claus on their behavior. This simple idea has blossomed into a multi-million dollar industry and a beloved holiday custom for families across the globe.

The Evolution of the Elf on the Shelf

Initially, the Elf on the Shelf was a quiet, observer-based tradition. Over the years, it's evolved into a vibrant, interactive experience. Families now get creative with their elf placements, staging elaborate scenarios, and even incorporating themed props to enhance the magic. This adaptability is crucial to maintaining its appeal across generations and different family structures.

Cultural Impact and Beyond the Shelf

The Elf on the Shelf has transcended its initial purpose. It has become a significant cultural phenomenon with global appeal. This evolution allows for the

incorporation of diverse traditions into the practice. It's not just about the elf; it's about the shared moments, family bonding, and the fostering of creativity.

Creating Memorable Moments: The Role of Creativity and Storytelling

The true magic of the Elf on the Shelf lies in the creative interpretations. Families aren't just moving an elf; they're building stories, fostering imagination, and adding a personal touch to the holiday season.

Case Study: The Rodriguez Family

The Rodriguez family, with three children aged 5, 7, and 9, started the Elf on the Shelf in 2018. Initially, they kept the elf's movements simple, but soon, their creativity took off. They started incorporating thematic scenarios, often relating them to current events or interests like dinosaurs or space travel, sparking lively discussions and creative problem-solving sessions.

The Practicalities of the Elf on the Shelf

While the tradition is deeply personal, some practicalities are important to consider for successful implementation:

- *Elf Procurement and Placement:* Choosing an elf and finding the right spots within the home is crucial for a seamless transition into the routine. Planning ahead or utilizing various prop options can save time and stress during the holiday season.
- **Maintaining the Illusion:** The secret to the Elf on the Shelf magic lies in maintaining the mystery and anticipation around the elf's movements. Some families meticulously plan and prepare props, while others opt for more spontaneous, surprising arrangements.
- **Building a Routine:** Establishing a clear routine helps minimize friction and allows everyone to engage with the elf's antics. Having a pre-determined timeframe for the elf's activities can be helpful for younger children who enjoy predictability and structure.

Beyond the Fun: The Emotional Connection

The Elf on the Shelf fosters a strong emotional connection within families. It's more than just a game; it's a shared experience that builds anticipation, sparks joy, and promotes family bonding. • *Shared Storytelling*: Families can engage in creative storytelling and imaginative play surrounding the elf's activities. The shared experiences build lasting memories and stronger family bonds. • Developing Creativity: The tradition encourages creative thinking and problem-solving as families work together to find creative ways to reposition and stage the elf.

Potential Challenges and Mitigation Strategies

While the tradition is enriching, there are potential challenges to be aware of: • **Potential Stress**: Some families might find the tradition overly stressful if not managed effectively. Planning ahead and adjusting expectations can mitigate this. • *Over-Commercialization Concerns*: The tradition has been subject to criticism regarding over-commercialization. Focusing on the experiences rather than the products can help alleviate these concerns.

Expert-Level FAQs

1. **How can I maintain the surprise element in the Elf on the Shelf without it becoming predictable?** Plan variations in the elf's movements, incorporating seasonal themes or even daily occurrences. 2. How do I adapt the Elf on the Shelf to suit families with diverse backgrounds? Research and incorporate cultural elements into the elf's stories, making them reflect the community's values. 3. **What are some practical ways to involve younger children in**

the Elf on the Shelf experience? Engage them in simple tasks like finding the elf's hiding place or creating simple props. 4. What are the alternatives to the Elf on the Shelf for families who might be concerned about the commercial aspects? Consider other holiday traditions or create your unique family rituals focused on generosity and joy. 5. *How can I ensure the Elf on the Shelf tradition remains positive and sustainable for years to come?* Focus on creating memorable moments, limit the commercial aspects, and involve open communication and agreement within the family unit. Conclusion The Elf on the Shelf tradition, with its blend of magic, creativity, and family connection, has resonated with families worldwide. While the specifics may vary, the core essence of shared joy, bonding, and holiday cheer remains constant. By understanding the nuances of the tradition and implementing a thoughtful approach, families can cherish these memories for years to come. Remember, the true magic lies in the experiences you create together. Happy Holidays!

The Elf on the Shelf Tradition: Unpacking the Magic of a Modern Holiday Phenomenon

The holiday season is a time brimming with cherished traditions, from decorating the Christmas tree to baking gingerbread cookies. But in recent years, a whimsical new character has firmly planted itself in many homes, bringing a unique brand of playful mischief and anticipatory excitement: the Elf on the Shelf. If you've ever wondered about this pint-sized observer and its nightly escapades, you've come to the right place. We're diving deep into the delightful world of the Elf on the Shelf tradition, exploring its origins, how it works, and why it has captured the hearts of families worldwide.

What Exactly is an Elf on the Shelf?

At its core, the Elf on the Shelf is a Christmas tradition centered around a scout elf sent from the North Pole to help Santa Claus manage his naughty and nice lists. These elves are typically small, plush toys that come with a children's book explaining their purpose. The story goes that once an elf is adopted and named by a family, it gains its Christmas magic. This magic allows it to fly back to the North Pole each night to report to Santa, and then return to the family's home before the children wake up. The key element of the tradition is that the elf is a silent observer during the day. Children are told that the elf will only move and speak when they are asleep or out of the room. This creates an exciting element of mystery and wonder, as the children know their elf is watching, but its nightly journey is a secret.

The Origins of the Elf on the Shelf

The Elf on the Shelf phenomenon didn't appear out of thin air. It all began with a book, "The Elf on the Shelf: A Christmas Tradition," written by Carol Aebersold and her daughter, Chanda Bell, and illustrated by Steve Gowdy. Published in 2005, the book tells the story of a young girl named Maddie who receives a special elf. The concept of adopting an elf and placing it around the house for children to find each morning became an instant hit. The self-published book, initially sold at local craft fairs, gradually gained traction. It was later picked up by larger retailers, and the accompanying elf toys became widely available. The tradition's popularity exploded, largely through word-of-mouth and the power of social media, turning a simple story into a global holiday sensation. Many parents appreciate the Elf on the Shelf for adding an extra layer of festive fun and engagement during the often hectic pre-Christmas period.

How the Elf on the Shelf Tradition Works

Setting up your own Elf on the Shelf tradition is quite straightforward. Here's a breakdown of the typical process:

1. Adoption Day: Welcoming Your Elf

The tradition usually begins on the day after Thanksgiving or the first day of December. This is when families "adopt" their elf. The children, with the help of their parents, will often name the elf. The naming process can be a fun family activity in itself, sparking creativity and discussion. The accompanying book is read aloud to explain the elf's role and the rules of engagement.

2. The Nightly Journey: Reporting to Santa

Once the children have gone to bed, the magic begins. The parents (or guardians) are responsible for moving the elf to a new, often surprising, location in the house. This is where the creativity and fun really come into play. The elf's nightly travels are its secret mission to report to Santa.

3. The Morning Surprise: Discovery and Delight

Each morning, the children wake up with eager anticipation, ready to find out where their elf has landed for the day. This discovery is a highlight, and it's often met with giggles, gasps, and shouts of excitement. The elf's location can range from simple spots like a bookshelf or kitchen counter to more elaborate scenarios.

4. The Rules of the Elf

There are a couple of key rules associated with the Elf on the Shelf: * **Don't Touch:** The most important rule is that children should not touch their elf. Touching the elf will supposedly break its Christmas magic, preventing it from flying back to the North Pole. * **It Watches and Listens:** The elf is an observer and a reporter. It sees and hears everything the children do, relaying this information to Santa. This aspect has been playfully interpreted by some parents as a gentle way to encourage good behavior, though it's primarily intended for fun.

Creative Elf on the Shelf Ideas: Keeping the Magic Alive

The real magic of the Elf on the Shelf tradition lies in the nightly repositioning. While the concept is simple, the execution can be as creative as you like. Parents often spend months brainstorming unique and humorous elf scenarios. Here are some popular categories of elf antics:

Naughty and Nice Mischief

These elves aren't afraid to have a little fun at the family's expense. * **Foodie Fun:** The elf might have a feast of cereal, make "pancakes" with syrup spilled on the counter, or even raid the cookie jar. * **Playful Pranks:** Wrapping the toilet in toilet paper, drawing mustaches on family photos, or building a fort out of pillows are classic elf pranks. * **Toy Takeover:** The elf could be found playing with the children's toys, riding on a toy train, or even having a "meeting" with action figures.

Adventurous Escapades

The elf might embark on daring journeys around the house. * **High-Flying Hijinks:** Using dental floss or ribbon to hang from the ceiling fan or a chandelier. * **Kitchen Capers:** Climbing the refrigerator, exploring the pantry, or even "baking" with toy utensils. * **Living Room Leisure:** Lounging in the fireplace (safely, of course!), hiding amongst the Christmas decorations, or swinging from a curtain rod.

Sweet and Sentimental Moments

Not all elf activities are about mischief; some are about spreading holiday cheer. * **Gift Giving:** Leaving small treats, candy canes, or even tiny gifts for the children. * **Crafty Creations:** Making a small craft with the children's art supplies or leaving a handwritten note. * **Cozy Comforts:** Curling up with a miniature book, sitting in a doll's chair, or tucked into a small bed made from a

box. The key to successful elf staging is to vary the scenarios, keep it fresh, and tailor it to your children's ages and interests. There are countless online resources and social media groups dedicated to sharing Elf on the Shelf ideas, providing an endless wellspring of inspiration.

The Benefits of the Elf on the Shelf Tradition

Beyond the sheer fun, the Elf on the Shelf tradition offers several benefits for families: * **Enhanced Holiday Magic:** It injects an extra dose of wonder and excitement into the Christmas season, making it more memorable for children. The anticipation of the morning's discovery is a powerful motivator. *

* **Encourages Imaginative Play:** The elf's presence and activities can spark imaginative play and storytelling among children. They might wonder what the elf will do next or create their own narratives around its adventures. * **Promotes Good Behavior (Playfully):** While not intended as a disciplinary tool, the knowledge that an elf is watching can sometimes encourage children to be more mindful of their actions and to try and stay on Santa's good list. * **Family Bonding:** The daily search for the elf and the shared excitement create a special bonding experience for families. It's a tradition that parents and children can enjoy together. * **Routine and Structure:** For many families, the elf's daily appearance provides a comforting and predictable routine during a busy time of year, signaling that the holiday season is in full swing.

Addressing Concerns and Criticisms

Like any popular trend, the Elf on the Shelf has faced some criticism. Some parents express concerns about the emphasis on being watched and the potential for it to create anxiety about "naughty" versus "nice." Others find the nightly repositioning to be an added stressor during an already busy time. It's important to remember that the Elf on the Shelf is intended to be a lighthearted and enjoyable tradition. Parents can adapt it to suit their family's values and comfort levels. If the idea of an elf reporting to Santa feels too intense, the focus can be shifted to the elf's playful adventures and its role as a visitor from the

North Pole. The goal is to add joy, not pressure. Ultimately, the success of the Elf on the Shelf tradition rests on how families choose to interpret and implement it.

The Elf on the Shelf: A Modern Holiday Staple

In just a couple of decades, the Elf on the Shelf has transitioned from a niche book and toy to a ubiquitous part of the modern Christmas landscape. It has sparked countless conversations, inspired endless creative endeavors, and brought smiles to millions of faces. Whether your family embraces the tradition wholeheartedly, dabbles in it occasionally, or prefers other holiday customs, there's no denying the impact this little scout elf has had on the way many families celebrate the holiday season. It's a testament to the power of storytelling, imagination, and the enduring magic of Christmas. So, as December rolls around, keep an eye out for those twinkling eyes and mischievous grins – your Elf on the Shelf might just be getting ready for its next adventure. Looking for more holiday magic? Explore our other guides on [festive Christmas crafts](#) and [delicious holiday recipes](#) to make your season even more memorable!

The Elf on the Shelf Tradition: A Charming Cultural Phenomenon The elf on the shelf has become more than just a whimsical holiday decoration—it is a beloved tradition that blends creativity, family bonding, and seasonal joy. Originating in the United States in the early 2000s, this custom centers around a small, often painted wooden elf placed atop a kitchen or living room shelf. What began as a playful idea has evolved into a widespread practice embraced by families across the globe, particularly during the Christmas season. The concept is simple yet captivating: a tiny elf, carefully positioned by children each evening before bedtime, “goes” to another room or hides in a new spot, returning the next morning to report on family behavior—all captured in whimsical photos. Beneath its lighthearted surface, the tradition carries deeper cultural resonance. Rooted in the spirit of Christmas and the magical imagery of holiday folklore, the elf serves as a symbol of the season's themes—innocence, wonder, and the joy

of shared rituals. For children, placing the elf fosters a sense of participation in the festive spirit, encouraging imagination and engagement with the holiday. Parents often find the tradition not only endearing but also effective in reinforcing positive behavior through a playful, non-confrontational method. The elusive elf becomes a storyteller, sparking curiosity and conversation as families eagerly await each morning's surprise. From a practical standpoint, the elf on the shelf is surprisingly versatile. While traditionally a wooden figure painted in classic elf attire, modern iterations include personalized versions featuring names, photos, or seasonal themes—transforming the ornament into a meaningful keepsake. Many families use it as a creative outlet, encouraging children to design or decorate their own elves, turning holiday crafting into an educational and bonding experience. Beyond the home, the tradition has inspired community displays, photo challenges, and even commercial products, reflecting its broad cultural reach and adaptability. The benefits of the elf on the shelf extend beyond festive cheer. Psychologically, it nurtures responsibility and narrative thinking in children, as each morning's "report" invites reflection and storytelling. Socially, it strengthens family connections through shared rituals, creating lasting memories tied to the holiday. Economically, the trend has driven a niche market in themed decor, inspiring retailers to offer customizable versions, themed accessories, and seasonal kits. This commercial growth underscores how cultural traditions can evolve into sustainable consumer practices. Looking ahead, the elf on the shelf tradition appears poised to endure and adapt. As families continue to seek meaningful, low-effort holiday activities, the charm of a small wooden elf watching over the home remains irresistible. Whether embraced as a nostalgic ritual or reimagined with new technologies—such as interactive digital versions—the tradition exemplifies how simple, imaginative customs can enrich family life. Its lasting appeal lies in its ability to merge play with storytelling, turning the magic of Christmas into a daily celebration that brings joy, connection, and wonder to homes around the world.

Unveiling the Magic: What is the Elf on the Shelf Tradition?

For many families, the arrival of December signals more than just chilly weather and festive decorations. It heralds the return of a mischievous, watchful guest: the Elf on the Shelf. This seemingly simple tradition has captured the hearts of millions, transforming mundane holiday moments into magical adventures. But what exactly is the Elf on the Shelf, and why has it become such an enduring part of modern Christmas celebrations?

At its core, the **Elf on the Shelf tradition** is a captivating game of hide-and-seek played out over the Christmas season. It revolves around a special scout elf, typically a plush toy, who is sent by Santa Claus to observe children's behavior and report back to the North Pole. The elf's primary role is to gauge whether children are being "naughty or nice" in the lead-up to Christmas Day, ensuring Santa's list is accurate.

The Origins and Rise of a Modern Christmas Icon

The genesis of the Elf on the Shelf tradition can be traced back to a heartwarming children's book, *The Elf on the Shelf: A Christmas Tradition*, written by Carol Aebersold and illustrated by her daughter, Chanda Bell. Published in 2005, the book introduced the concept of these magical elves and their clandestine mission. The story explains that once a family adopts an elf, it receives its Christmas magic and flies back to the North Pole each night to report to Santa. The magic allows the elf to travel instantly, but it can't move or speak when children are awake. This rule forms the backbone of the playful hide-and-seek element.

The book quickly gained traction, resonating with parents seeking to add an extra layer of enchantment to the holiday season. The accompanying elf doll,

sold as a set with the book, became a must-have item. What started as a niche concept has since exploded into a global phenomenon, with elves appearing in homes across continents, sparking countless conversations about **Christmas traditions** and their evolution. The marketing of the Elf on the Shelf has been remarkably successful, leveraging social media and word-of-mouth to solidify its place in contemporary Christmas lore. It's now a significant part of the **holiday season** for many families.

The Mechanics of the Magic: How the Elf on the Shelf Works

The beauty of the Elf on the Shelf tradition lies in its simplicity and the creative freedom it offers. Here's a breakdown of how it typically unfolds:

Arrival and Adoption

The tradition usually begins on December 1st, when the scout elf "arrives" at the family's home, often with a poem or a note explaining their purpose. This arrival can be orchestrated in various ways, from appearing on the doorstep to a surprise discovery in the Christmas tree. Families can choose their elf's name, further personalizing the experience and fostering a bond between the child and the toy.

The Nightly Journey and Daily Observations

The core of the tradition involves the elf's nightly escapades. Each night, after the children are asleep, the elf flies back to the North Pole to relay their observations to Santa. This is where the real fun for parents and children begins. The following morning, the elf is discovered in a new, often humorous or creative, hiding spot. This daily "reveal" is a highlight for children, eagerly searching for their elf's latest location.

The Art of the Elf's Pranks

Parents, acting as Santa's helpers, are responsible for moving the elf and creating these delightful scenarios. This aspect of the tradition has spawned a vast online community of parents sharing their innovative elf ideas. From the elf "fishing" in the sink with Goldfish crackers to the elf building a toilet paper fort or even drawing on a whiteboard, the possibilities are endless. These **elf on the shelf ideas** are a testament to parental creativity and the desire to keep the magic alive. Some popular themes include the elf interacting with other toys, leaving little notes, or even enjoying snacks.

Maintaining the Magic: Rules and Etiquette

A crucial element of the Elf on the Shelf tradition is the "no touching" rule. According to the lore, if a child touches the elf, it loses its Christmas magic and cannot fly back to Santa. This rule adds an element of suspense and reinforces the elf's magical nature. Parents must be careful not to touch the elf when repositioning it, often using kitchen tongs or gloves to maintain the illusion. This adherence to the **elf's magic** is key to sustaining the fantasy.

Departure

On Christmas Eve, the scout elf makes its final journey back to the North Pole, leaving a parting gift or a heartfelt message for the children, signifying the end of its observation period and the impending arrival of Santa Claus himself.

Why the Elf on the Shelf Tradition Resonates

The enduring popularity of the Elf on the Shelf tradition can be attributed to several factors:

Fostering a Sense of Wonder and Anticipation

In an age of instant gratification and digital distractions, the Elf on the Shelf provides a tangible source of magic and anticipation. The daily hunt for the elf

creates excitement and keeps the spirit of Christmas alive throughout the month. It transforms the waiting period into an engaging and memorable experience, adding a unique twist to the **Christmas countdown**.

Encouraging Good Behavior (with a Touch of Fun)

The underlying premise of the elf reporting back to Santa about good behavior is a subtle way to encourage children to be mindful of their actions. While not a strict disciplinary tool, the presence of the elf can serve as a gentle reminder to be kind, helpful, and well-behaved. The playful nature of the elf's antics ensures that this encouragement comes with a smile rather than pressure.

Sparking Creativity and Family Bonding

For parents, the Elf on the Shelf presents an annual creative challenge. Planning and executing the elf's daily adventures can be a source of joy and a unique way to connect with their children. These shared experiences, filled with laughter and surprise, strengthen family bonds and create lasting memories. The collaborative effort to come up with new **elf on the shelf scenarios** often becomes a family activity.

A Modern Take on Timeless Christmas Themes

The Elf on the Shelf taps into the timeless themes of Santa Claus, magic, and the spirit of giving that are central to the Christmas narrative. It provides a fresh, interactive way for children to engage with these themes, making the holiday feel more personal and immediate. It's a modern interpretation of age-old **Christmas magic**.

Potential Criticisms and Considerations

While widely embraced, the Elf on the Shelf tradition is not without its critics. Some argue that it:

1. **Promotes surveillance and encourages tattling.** The idea of an elf

constantly watching and reporting can be seen as creating an environment of surveillance.

2. **Places undue pressure on parents.** The expectation to constantly come up with creative elf antics can be a source of stress for busy parents, especially when trying to compete with the elaborate displays seen online. The pressure to create "viral-worthy" **elf moments** can be overwhelming.
3. **Commercializes the spirit of Christmas.** The tradition is intrinsically linked to the sale of elf dolls and associated merchandise, leading some to believe it's a purely commercial endeavor rather than a genuinely magical one.

However, proponents argue that the tradition can be adapted to suit individual family values. The emphasis can be placed on fun and creativity, rather than strict behavioral monitoring. Parents can choose to keep their elf's antics simple and low-key, focusing on shared laughter and the joy of discovery. The key is to make it work for your family and avoid unnecessary pressure.

Conclusion: A Festive Fixture

The Elf on the Shelf tradition, born from a simple storybook and a cuddly toy, has evolved into a significant and beloved part of the modern Christmas landscape. It offers a unique blend of magic, anticipation, and family fun, encouraging good behavior and sparking boundless creativity. While considerations about its implementation are valid, for many, the joy and enchantment it brings to the holiday season make it an invaluable tradition. Whether your elf is a master of disguise or a simple observer, its presence undoubtedly adds an extra sparkle to the most wonderful time of the year, solidifying its place as a cherished **Christmas tradition** for generations to come. The enduring appeal of the **scout elf** lies in its ability to weave a narrative of wonder into the everyday, making the month of December a truly magical countdown to Christmas.

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Environmental considerations also play a role. Digital books reduce the need for printing, shipping, and physical storage. While technology itself has an

environmental footprint, the shift toward digital resources represents a more efficient way to distribute knowledge on a large scale.

Perhaps most importantly, digital access connects learners globally.

Downloading **What Is The Elf On The Shelf Tradition** allows people from different cultures, backgrounds, and locations to engage with the same ideas. This shared access encourages dialogue, collaboration, and mutual understanding, strengthening the global learning community.

In conclusion, the digital availability of **What Is The Elf On The Shelf Tradition** empowers learners in a way that feels practical, human, and forward-looking. Through convenience, affordability, interactivity, and ethical access, digital books support meaningful learning experiences. When used responsibly through trusted platforms, **What Is The Elf On The Shelf Tradition** becomes more than just a downloadable file—it becomes a companion for continuous growth, curiosity, and intellectual development.

Questions & Answers About what is the elf on the shelf tradition

N o	Question	Answer
1	What exactly *is* the Elf on the Shelf tradition?	The Elf on the Shelf is a modern Christmas tradition where parents place a scout elf toy in their home, usually after Thanksgiving. This elf 'reports' to Santa each night on whether the children have been good or bad, returning to a new hiding spot each morning.
2	How did the Elf on the Shelf tradition become so popular?	It gained widespread popularity through word-of-mouth, social media sharing of creative elf antics, and its presence in popular culture. The interactive and magical nature of the elf appeals to both children and parents.

3	When does the Elf on the Shelf typically arrive and depart?	Most families welcome their elf around or after Thanksgiving Day and have it stay until Christmas Eve. On Christmas Eve, the elf reportedly returns to the North Pole to help Santa deliver presents.
4	What are some fun things elves are known to do?	Elves are known for their mischievous and creative adventures! Popular activities include zip-lining, making messes (like flour snow angels or drawing on the mirror with toothpaste), playing games, eating snacks, and interacting with other toys.
5	Is there a 'right' or 'wrong' way to do the Elf on the Shelf?	There's no strict rulebook! The tradition is meant to be fun and magical for your family. Some families go all out with elaborate setups, while others prefer simpler hiding spots. The most important part is enjoying the festive spirit it brings.
6	What are the origins of the Elf on the Shelf?	The tradition was created by Carol Aebersold and her twin daughters, Chanda Bell and Christa Pitts, and popularized by their self-published book 'The Elf on the Shelf: A Christmas Tradition' in 2005. The idea stemmed from their own family's Elf tradition.

elf on the shelf tradition explained, origin of the elf on the shelf tradition, meaning behind the elf on the shelf tradition, how the elf on the shelf became a Christmas custom, what does the elf on the shelf tradition mean, elf on the shelf holiday tradition guide, traditional placement of the elf on the shelf, history of the elf on the shelf tradition, elf on the shelf decorating tips, cultural significance of the elf on the shelf

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