

Happy Holidays from Gee Whiz!



Hidden Elves

Purpose: As the children participate in the main experience planned for this material, they will need to practice self-regulation skills and cooperation. In addition, the children will develop gross motor control, build both expressive and receptive language skills and explore positional concepts during the game.

Preparation:

To prepare, print out the elves on the next two pages and cut apart by following the dotted lines. If desired, tape each elf to a block. Hide the elves around the room.

Use:

Introduce the game, “Hidden Elves.” Tell the children that you heard that some little elves just might be hiding around the room. Challenge the children to find the hidden elves. As they do so, describe the locations where the children find the elves using positional words. For instance, “Oh, Jose...you found an elf under the pillow!” or “Talia...you found an elf behind the bookcase.” This is a meaningful way to help the children become familiar with positional concepts. After all of the elves have been found, have the children compare and contrast them. How are they the same? How are they different? Finally, invite each child to share which elf is his/her favorite and why. If the children enjoyed the game, hide the elves again for them to find.

Alternate Use: Print out two copies of the elves (so you have 2 of each elf) and have the children match them. This will be challenging because the elves are very similar. In doing so, the children will hone their visual discrimination skills.





Our Giving Tree

Purpose: The purpose of this experience is to help children become more familiar with the concept of giving. During the activities designed around this concept, the children will have the opportunity to share their ideas with others, express kindness, build fine motor control, language skills and much more.

Preparation:

Locate a small tree branch (a pine branch would work very well), a plastic flower pot and sand. Put the sand in the flowerpot and then add the tree branch to make the “Giving Tree.”

Use:

Show the children the, “Giving Tree” and invite them to explore it. As they do so, challenge them to use their senses of touch, smell, and sight. Explain that you are calling this tree a, “Giving Tree” because they are going to make ornaments to go on the tree that they will then give to family members. Next, have the children hold hands as they circle the “Giving Tree” while singing the song below. After singing, have the children use art/collage materials to create ornaments for the, “Giving Tree.” Keep this part of the experience open-ended, inviting the children to express their own creative ideas through art. As the children make their ornaments, be sure to engage them in conversations.

THE GIVING TREE

(tune: “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”)

On the Giving Tree you’ll see,
Gifts to you that come from me.
When I give a gift to you,
I feel good, it is so true.
On the Giving Tree you’ll see,
Gifts to you that come from me!



Infant/Toddler Exploration Activities

Purpose: These experiences invite infants and toddlers to learn more about their world through the use of their senses. As you describe the items as well as the infant or toddler's actions, you also help the infant/toddler build receptive language skills and future vocabulary.

Sparkle Sensory Bag

To Prepare: Locate a gallon-sized freezer bag and fill with clear hair gel and your choice of sparkly material (e.g., glitter, confetti, sequins...). Zip the bag to seal and then wrap all sides plus the top with duct tape.

Use:

Put the bag on the ground or on the infant/toddler's high chair tray and invite him/her to explore. Talk about how the items in the bag look and feel while the infant/toddler does so. Be sure to supervise directly and put out of reach when finished.



Box of Bows

To Prepare: Locate a plastic tub and fill with bows. Make sure to cover any staples on the backs of the bows with masking tape.

Use:

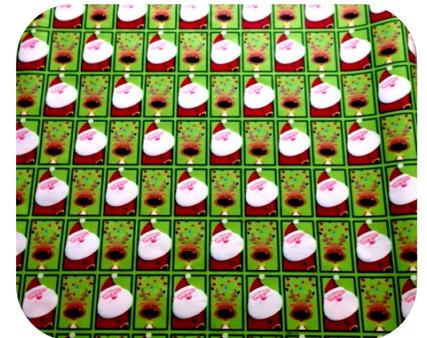
Put the box of bows on the ground and invite the infant or toddler to explore. Talk about the colors of the bows as well as the texture as the infant/toddler explores them. This is an excellent way of building receptive language skills.

Wrapping Paper Rumble

To Prepare: Cut off a large piece of wrapping paper and use blue painter's tape to attach to the floor. (Test the tape first to make sure it will not harm the floor's surface).

Use:

Invite the infant or toddler to crawl on the wrapping paper. As the infant or toddler does so, talk about the sound created by the paper. In addition, describe the colors and design of the paper. This is a meaningful way to expose infants and toddlers to colors, shapes and patterns.



Coupon Book

Purpose: As children create this unique holiday gift, they will be exposed to print, build language skills, better understand that spoken words can be written down and much more! In addition, the activities included in the coupon book promote kindness and responsibility...two important character education concepts.

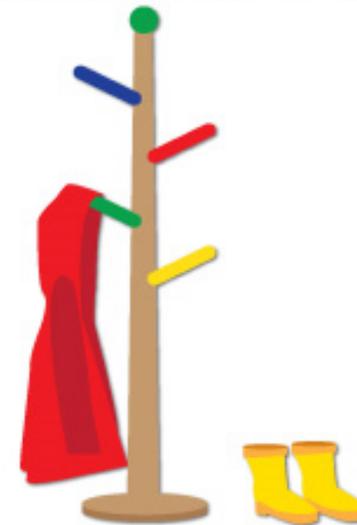
Preparation:

To prepare, print out a copy of the following two pages for each child. You will also need a stapler, child-safe scissors, crayons/markers and a digital camera or smartphone for this activity.

Use:

It's time to make a holiday gift for someone special. To begin, have the children look at the pictures on the sheets. Read the sentences and invite the children to share their thoughts. Take time to talk about letters, words and sentences as you read each coupon to the children. Next, have the children cut the pages apart by following the dotted lines. Help each child stack the pages in order and write "From (child's name)" on the cover. On the last page, each child can draw a picture of him/herself giving a loved one a hug OR you can take a photo of the child with his/her arms outstretched, print it out and then have him/her glue it on that page. If any of the children would like to make more than one coupon book, that is just fine! Simply print out another copy of the pages for them to use.

A Coupon Book for You



I will hang up my coat.

1.



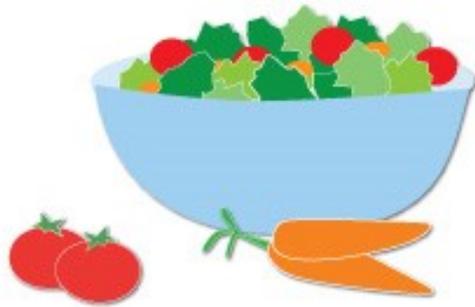
I will clean up my room.

2.



I will pick up my toys.

3.



I will help make dinner.

4.



I will sweep up crumbs.

5.



I will feed my pet.

6.

I will give you a big hug!

7.

Holiday Handprints

Purpose: The purpose of this material is to help children create a simple gift they can give to others. The addition of a rhyme adds an element of literacy. As the children create their handprints, they will make choices, explore colors and develop fine motor control.

Preparation:

Print out a copy of the Holiday Handprints sheet (on the next page) for each child. If some children want to make more than one gift, that is fine! Just print out extra copies.

Use:

Teach the children the rhyme on the sheet. Then, invite each child to choose paint to use to make his/her handprints on either side of the rhyme on the paper. While making the prints, talk about the colors the child chooses as well as how handprints are unique and special. After the handprints dry, send them home with the children and remind them to deliver their “gift” with a great, big hug!





My gift to you is easy to see;
It is two handprints made by me!
It's filled with love from me to you,
And comes with a big hug...this is true!

Holiday Patterning

Purpose: Patterning is an important mathematical skill. This material is designed to help children practice copying, extending and creating patterns. As the children utilize this material, they will also build fine motor control, practice visual discrimination skills and build vocabulary.

Preparation:

To prepare the Holiday Patterning material, print out a copy of the following pages for each child plus one to use as a center material (if you would like). Have the children cut along all dotted lines to create a set of pattern strips and cards.

Use:

To play, have the children start by copying the patterns on the strips. To do this, the children should place the matching cards on top of the pictures on the strips or above/below them. Once the children master copying the patterns, they can then try to extend them. To do this, the children will place the cards at the ends of the strips to keep the pattern going. Finally, more advanced children can use the individual cards to create their own patterns. As the children copy, extend and create patterns, be sure to engage them in conversations. This is an excellent way to challenge them to share their ideas verbally.

Alternate Use: Print out an addition set of cards (not strips) and have the children use these to practice making sets. They can sort the pictures by type and then count the number of matching items in each set.





Reindeer Food Recipe

Purpose: Cooking involves measurement and measurement is math. This cooking activity does not involve the use of heat so it is safe for all children. As the children participate in this activity, there is sure to be a lot of excited discussion. This is an excellent way for children to practice taking turns during conversations as they share their ideas with others.

NOTE: Our recipe for reindeer food does not use glitter because it is dangerous for animals to ingest. Instead we use colored sugar. That way, the birds can enjoy the birdseed and oats while the sugar dissolves into the soil.

Ingredients and Equipment:

- Wild birdseed mix
- Oats (quick cooking or old fashioned)
- Red and green colored sugars
- Measuring cup
- Mixing bowl
- Large spoon
- Zipper-top bags & clear tape
- Print out of the Reindeer Food labels on the next page (1 label per child)



With this recipe, you will need to adjust the amount of wild birdseed mix and oats you use based on the number of children in your group. Plan on about 1/2-3/4 of a cup of completed Reindeer Food for each child. The amount of sugar you choose to use is totally up to you and the children!

Begin by explaining to the children what Reindeer Food is. Share the poem on the labels (on the next page) and invite the children to share their ideas about whether or not they think the Reindeer Food will work.

Next, have the children help measure the birdseed mix, oats and sugars into a large bowl and mix well. Then, have each child scoop out 1/2 to 3/4 of a cup of Reindeer Food to put in a zipper-top bag. Seal and have each child attach a label with tape to the outside. Send the Reindeer Food home for the children to sprinkle on their lawns on Christmas Eve.

Amazing Reindeer Food

On Christmas Eve, take this reindeer food,
And sprinkle it on the grass.

When Santa's reindeer
spot this tasty treat,
They will fly to your
house fast!



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