

Gee Whiz Christmas Bundle



Getting Started

We hope that you and your children enjoy the experiences included in this Christmas Bundle. On the first few pages, you will find some ideas on how you can use common holiday materials (e.g., wrapping paper) in new and innovative ways. Following that, you will find a wide variety of activities and printable materials. These include:

- Hidden Elves
- Our Giving Tree
- Infant/Toddler Exploration Activities
- Coupon Book
- Holiday Handprints
- Holiday Patterning
- Reindeer Food Recipe
- Gingerbread Find 'N Count
- Holiday Lotto Game
- Mitten Match Game
- Pin the Nose on the Reindeer
- Fill Santa's Sleigh
- School-Age Holiday Fun



Holiday Material Ideas

Gift Wrap & Boxes

Set up a gift wrapping center and include gift wrap, boxes, tape, child-safe scissors, tags, etc. This is a fun way for children to engage in dramatic play while building fine motor skills. Wrapping boxes also requires children to problem-solve! Not only will they have to figure out how to get the wrapping paper on the box, they will also need to figure out what size of box to use for the "gift" they choose to wrap!



Gift Wrap Collages

We all end up with odds and ends when wrapping gifts. Add these scraps to your art center so children can use them as they create. Ask families to send in gift wrap scraps as well. The more...the better!

Gift Wrap Match Up

Create a matching game by cutting two rectangles from assorted wrapping paper designs. Mount these to index cards. Then, the children can match the patterns. This is an excellent way for them to build visual discrimination skills, review colors and perhaps even talk about shapes!

More Holiday Material Ideas

Find the Bows

Here's a fun game to play when the children seem like they need to get out some energy! Hide bows around the room or even outside. Then, set out a paper grocery bag or clothesbasket and challenge the children to see how fast they can find all the bows. More verbal children can name the colors of bows they find. Then, once all the bows have been found, the children can sort them by color, size, type, etc.



Bow Painting

Everyone has some bows that have seen better days. Use these for painting! Set out shallow dishes of paint and invite the children to use the bows in any way they would like to create. Some children may choose to press the bows into paint and then on paper. Others may choose to actually paint the bows themselves! Remember... the end result is not what is important. It is the process that matters!

More Holiday Material Ideas



Down the Tube!

Wrapping paper tubes can be so much fun when you add toy vehicles! The children can experiment with sending different types of vehicles down the tubes. The children will not only develop fine motor control as they do so but will also need to practice problem-solving skills. After all, not all vehicles will fit in the tubes. The children can also experiment to see what happens when they prop up the tubes on a chair or the couch. How does this affect the speed at which the vehicles travel through the tube?

Building with Wrapping Paper Tubes

Ask families to send in their empty wrapping paper tubes and then set up a building center. Include different types of tape (e.g., clear, duct, painter's, etc.) and invite the children to use these materials to build structures. As the children do so, they will need to practice problem-solving skills as they put their ideas to the test. They will also build fine motor control and, if they choose to work together, cooperation skills.

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 "Talía...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.

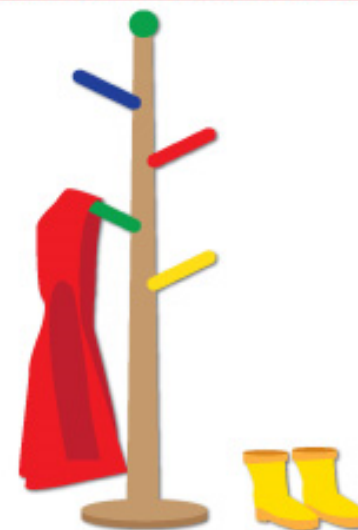
Preparation:

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 cellphone 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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Gingerbread House Find 'N Count

Purpose: The purpose of this material is to help children practice visual discrimination, counting and language skills.

Preparation:

Just print out the gingerbread house picture on the next page and you are ready to go! If desired, print out a copy for each child plus one to use as a learning center.

Use:

Show the children the gingerbread house and invite them to share their thoughts. Ask open-ended questions such as, "What do you like best about gingerbread houses?" or "If you could make your own gingerbread house, what types of candy would you use?" These types of questions help children build expressive language skills. Then, have the children choose one of the candies at the bottom of the picture. Challenge them to find all of the matching candies on the gingerbread house. As the find each one, count out loud with the children. How many of each type of candy can they find?

Alternate Use: Print out a copy of this display and cut the gingerbread house from the top portion. Mount the gingerbread house to heavyweight paper and cut into pieces...like a puzzle. The children can then put the gingerbread house back together.



hard candies



gumdrops



lollipops



gingerbread man



chocolate candies



peppermints



candy canes



licorice

Holiday Lotto Game

Purpose: As children play this fun game, they will develop visual discrimination skills, fine motor control and both expressive and receptive language skills.

Preparation:

To prepare the Holiday Lotto Game, print out a copy of the following page 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 playing card and individual cards.

Use:

To play the game, the children should match the pictures by placing the individual cards on top of the playing cards. As the children play with this material, engage them in conversations, asking open-ended questions such as, "Which item on the card do you like best? Why do you like that one?" or "What other items could be on this card that remind you of the holidays?"

Alternate Use: Print out two copies of the individual game cards (so you have 2 of each picture) and then use to play a memory game.



Mitten Memory Game

Purpose: The purpose of this material is to help children practice visual discrimination, memory, counting and language skills.

Preparation:

Just print out the mitten cards on the next two pages. If you want to make the game more durable, mount each sheet to heavyweight paper and cut apart. You could also cut the cards apart and then glue to index cards. To make even more durable, cover with clear Contact® paper.

Use:

Show the children the mitten cards. Invite them to explore the cards and challenge those children who are more verbal to compare and contrast them. How are the mittens alike? How are the different? If you live in a part of the country where the children wear mittens, encourage them to compare the mittens featured on the cards to their own mittens. Now would also be an excellent time to introduce/reinforce the term *pair* and help the children discover that when you have a pair of something, you have two. Next, have the children turn the mitten cards face down on the table and arrange them in a grid pattern. To play the game, the children can take turns turning over two cards. If the mittens match, the child takes the pair and turns over two more cards. If the mittens do not match, the child turns the cards face down and another child takes a turn. Continue playing until all of the cards are matched.

Alternate Use: Hang a piece of string/yarn to create a “clothesline.” Put the mitten cards in a basket and locate a bunch of clothespins. Have the children use clothespins to hang the mitten pairs together on the “clothesline.”





Pin the Nose on the Reindeer

Purpose: As children play this fun game, they will practice self-regulation, taking turns, engaging with others and develop fine motor skills.

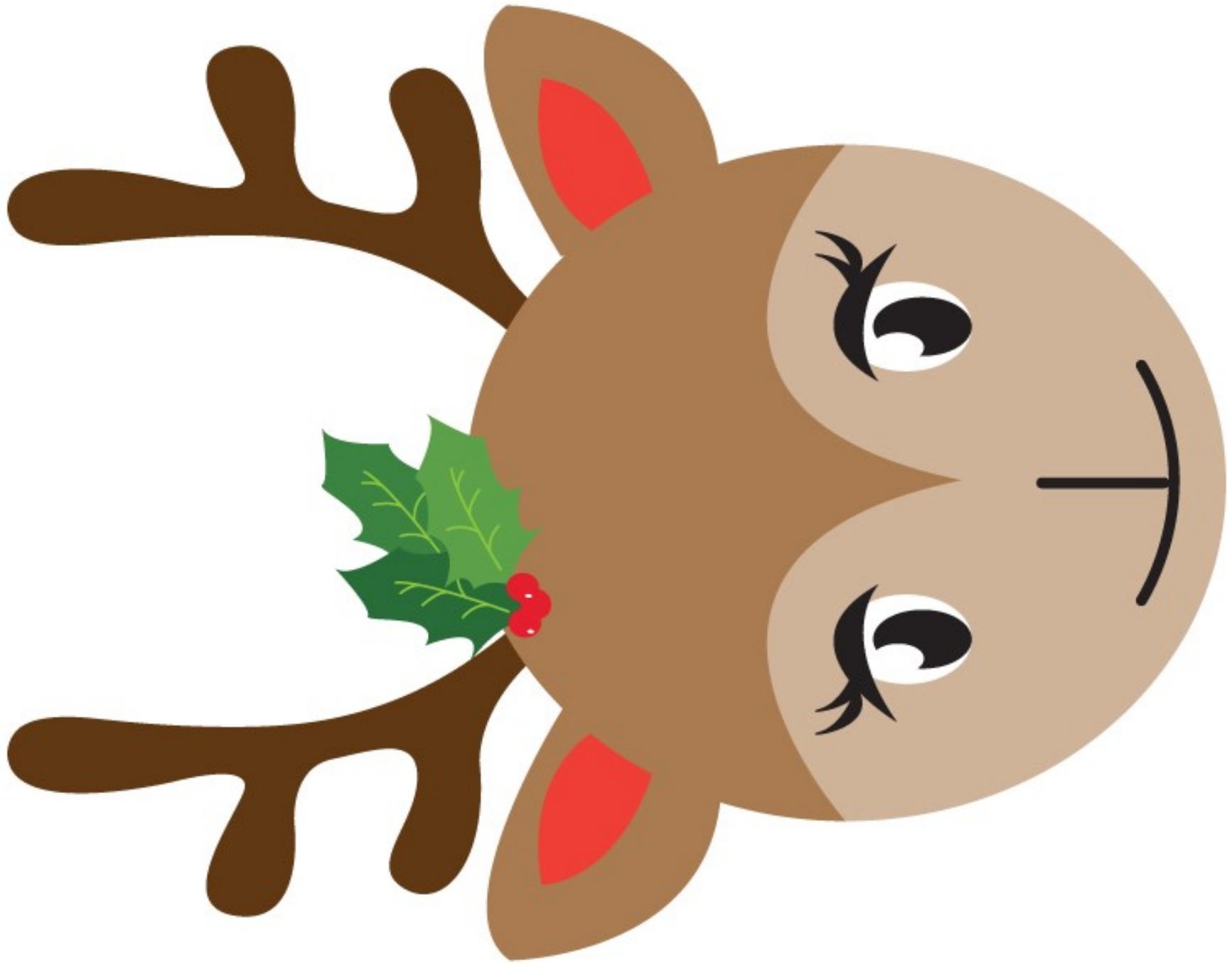
Preparation:

To prepare the Pin the Nose on the Reindeer Game, print out the next page, mount to posterboard and cover with clear Contact® paper. Locate a red pom-pom ball for each child and attach a loop of tape to the back. You will also need a blindfold for each child.

Use:

Hang the reindeer on a wall so that it is at the children's eye level. To play the game, explain to the children that they will need to try to "pin the nose on the reindeer" while blindfolded. Keep in mind that some children may not be comfortable wearing a blindfold and that is OK. These children can simply shut their eyes. After all of the children attempt to "pin the nose on the reindeer," see who came the closest to getting their red pom-pom in the right spot for the reindeer's nose.

Alternate Use: Use the reindeer to make masks on paper plates. You can cut out the eyes and then each child can glue on a red pom-pom for a nose.



Fill Santa's Sleigh

Purpose: The purpose of this material is to invite children to create a prop they can use for dramatic play while also reinforcing making choices and counting skills.

Preparation:

Print out a copy of Santa's sleigh for each child. Provide access to empty boxes and invite the children to cut the sheet apart by following the dotted lines and then gluing one side of Santa's sleigh to each side of the box.

Use:

Once the children finish their sleighs, they can attach a short length of string/yarn to one end and then fill "Santa's sleigh" with small toys or other items. They can then pull their sleighs around the room. As the children play, encourage those who are more verbal to talk about the items they put in Santa's sleigh. If you want to reinforce counting skills, have the children count how many items Santa has in his sleigh. For nonverbal children or those who are ELL/DLL, you can name/describe the items in Santa's sleigh for them. For ELL/DLL children, be sure to do this in both English and each child's home language.

Alternate Use: Print out another copy of Santa's sleigh and attach to a shoe box. Use this to play a guessing game. Put an item in Santa's sleigh and cover with a small towel. Give the children clues to help them guess what is in Santa's sleigh. When they think they know the answer, they can remove the towel to see if they are correct. Your more advanced children (e.g., school-age) could lead this game with younger children. This would be an excellent way for them to build leadership skills and practice communication.



School-Age Holiday Fun

Purpose: These experiences are designed for school-age/afterschool children.

Holiday Basket Weaving

To Prepare: Gather berry baskets (1 for each child) and red/green/silver/gold ribbon

Activity:

School-age/afterschool children have well-developed fine motor control and are able to weave (in most cases). Berry baskets provide the perfect medium for weaving. The children can cut lengths of ribbon to weave around their baskets. Some may choose to create patterns as they weave while other may not. The completed baskets would make excellent holiday gifts for family and friends! You could even fill them with fruit or a special holiday treat created by the children.

Wreath Ring Toss



To Prepare: Locate plastic lids. Cut out the centers but save the rims. You will also need green yarn and tape/glue. The children can help you transform the lid rims into wreaths by wrapping them with green yarn. Tape/glue to secure. You will also need a paper towel roll, some playdough and a baking sheet/cutting board.

To Play:

Put a ball of playdough on the baking sheet and flatten slightly. Stick one end of the paper towel roll into the dough so that it is standing up. Then, have the children take turns attempting to toss the “wreaths” (wrapped plastic lid rims) on to the paper towel roll. Each time they toss all the rims, have them count how many landing on the target and how many missed. They can write this as an addition fact (e.g., $4 + 3 = 7$).

Santa’s Elves Toy Making Station

To Prepare: Gather an assortment of recyclables, old wood scraps, fabric scraps, etc. that the children can use for making gifts.

Use:

Invite children who are interested to pretend to be Santa’s elves as they create gifts for family and friends from recyclables. Not only does this promote generosity and caring for others, it also teaches children to re-purpose and reuse materials instead of throwing them away. If desired, you may even want to invite the children to use cookie cutters and paint soaked sponges to make their own wrapping paper.