

Exploring Hanukkah



Learning about Hanukkah

Hanukkah is a special Jewish celebration that lasts for 8 days. This year, Hanukkah begins in the evening on December 26th and ends on January 2nd. Hanukkah celebrates a miracle that happened over 2000 years ago! Use the resource links below to help you gather information about Hanukkah to share with your group. How much you share and how you choose to share it will be dependent on the developmental levels of the children in your group. And, of course, if you have families in your program that celebrate Hanukkah, be sure to invite them in to participate in or lead experiences as well. Here are a few links to help you get started.

Information from National Geographic Kids

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/celebrations/article/hanukkah>

Video by Sesame Street: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hA69G1kAuk>

The Jewish Education Project

<https://educator.jewishedproject.org/content/resources-teaching-hanukkah>

PJ Library

<https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/november-2016/the-hanukkah-story-ages-3-5>



Learning about Hanukkah

Here is a book list to help you gather books about Hanukkah. Your local librarian is a great resource as well!

Hanukkah: The Festival of Lights by Bonnie Bader

Happy Hanukkah! (Peppa Pig) by Cala Spinner

The Story of Hanukkah by David A. Adler

Bright Baby Touch and Feel Hanukkah by Roger Priddy

The Night Before Hanukkah by Natasha Wing

Baby's First Hanukkah by DK Children



Hanukkah Symbols

There are several key symbols of Hanukkah. They are:



Menorah

The menorah (me-NO-rah) is a special type of candlestick that holds 9 candles. The shammash (SHAH-mash) candle is the one in the center. It is used to light each of the other candles. On the first night, one candle is lit. On the second night, 2 candles... and so on.



Star of David

The Star of David is the symbol most commonly associated with Judaism today. It is made from 2 equilateral triangles ... one pointing up and one pointing down.



Gifts

During Hanukkah, gifts are often given each night. These are usually small, meaningful gifts. One of the gifts given is gelt. Gelt is chocolate candy made to look like gold coins.

Hanukkah Symbols

There are a few more Hanukkah symbols. They are:



Dreidel

The dreidel (DRA-dle) is a special type of spinning top inscribed with Hebrew symbols on each side. The symbols are Nun, Gimel, Hay and Shin. Each has a different outcome when it is facing up during the game. Here is a video with a great description of how this game is played: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1m7PKnhWEI0>



Gelt

Gelt are chocolate coins given during Hanukkah. They are also used when playing the Dreidel Game.



Sufganiyot

Hanukkah, like most holidays, has special foods associated with it. Sufganiyot is one of these. These are delicious jelly doughnuts fried in oil. If you would like to make these tasty treats, here is just one recipe you might want to try: https://www.chabad.org/recipes/recipe_cdo/aid/3879370/jewish/Traditional-Sufganiyot-Jelly-Doughnuts.htm

Hanukkah Activities

Playdough Menorahs

Provide the children with playdough and birthday candles (3+ only). If you are working with Toddlers/ Twos, you will want to use larger pillar candles instead. Keep the experience open-ended. Some children may choose to create menorahs while others may not. That is OK. Regardless, be sure to engage the children in back and forth conversations as they create. Open-ended questions that begin with words like “why” and “how” are great ways to do this.

Painting with Candles

Lighting the candles on the menorah is a big part of Hanukkah. Today, provide the children with an assortment of candles and blue and white paint. Invite them to create using these materials in any way they wish. Now would be a great time to compare/contrast, explore the cylinder shape, colors and much more. More advanced children can count the candles and make predictions about the types of prints each candle will make. Again, if you are working with children 3 and under, be sure that none of the candles you choose to use could be a choking hazard.

More Hanukkah Activities

Find, Count, Eat

Gelt can be found in stores around the time of Hanukkah. Purchase some for your group and then hide it around the room when the children are not looking. Have the children work together to find all the gelt. Once found, they can count the gelt together. Have more advanced children figure out (using one-to-one correspondence) how to divide the gelt evenly among everyone. Then, let each child enjoy one piece of gelt (unless there are chocolate allergies or eating chocolate is not allowed). In this case, adapt the activity to use plastic gold coins instead of chocolate.



A Gift for You

As noted earlier, gifts are given during Hanukkah but they are small and meaningful. What could be more meaningful than something homemade? Set out an assortment of art and collage materials and invite the children to use them as desired to create small gifts. As the children create, be sure to engage them in conversations by asking plenty of open-ended questions.

More Hanukkah Activities



The Dreidel Song & Game

There is a traditional song children sing when playing the Dreidel Game. Here is a link so you can learn it yourself and then teach it to the children: https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/music_cdo/aid/797123/jewish/Dreidel-Song.htm

Once the children learn the song, use the link provided earlier to learn how to play the Dreidel Game and then play it with the children.

Latkes & Applesauce

Latkes (laat-kuhz) are a traditional Hanukkah food. These potato pancakes are delicious when served with applesauce! While the children cannot help make the latkes due to the hot oil, they could help make applesauce. Once apples are peeled and cut into chunks, the children can use plastic knives to cut them into small pieces. Then, you can put them in a pot with a little bit of water and cook until soft.

Here is just one recipe for latkes: https://www.chabad.org/recipes/recipe_cdo/aid/2742159/jewish/Traditional-Chanukah-Potato-Latkes.htm

Hanukkah Lotto

Purpose: The purpose of this material is to help children learn more about the some of the symbols of Hanukkah, build visual discrimination skills along with eye-hand coordination. Additionally, because there will be plenty of time for back-and-forth conversations, the children will build language along with social/emotional skills.

Preparation:

To prepare, print out a lotto sheet for each child. Depending on the developmental levels of the children in your group, have the children cut the sheet apart by following the dotted lines OR you may have to do this for them. Each child will also need an envelope to store the game card and individual cards.

Helpful Tip: Have the children use different colored markers to make dots on the back of each of their playing cards and individual cards. That way, if things get mixed up, you will be able to sort them out easily. Plus, it is a great way to talk about colors!

Use:

Have the children place their game cards face up on the table. Then, they will turn their individual cards face down. The children will pick cards one at a time to turn over and match to the same symbol on their playing card.

Alternate Use: You could also make 2 copies of the sheet. Cut apart & put the playing cards aside. Use only the individual cards to play a Memory Game.

