

Let's Celebrate Fall!

Fun, Hands-On Autumn Learning
for Infants through School-Age



Interactive Sensory Play, Nature
Exploration & Hands-On Crafts

High-Contrast Fall Leaf Sensory Bags

Objective: Visual tracking, tactile exploration, and fine motor grasp development.

Materials Needed: Gallon Ziploc bags, clear hair gel or water, red/orange/yellow silk leaves, painter's tape.

Instructions:

1. Fill a Ziploc bag halfway with clear gel or water and add several bright silk leaves.
2. Press out extra air and seal the bag securely. Tape all four edges flat to the floor or high-chair tray using painter's tape.
3. Encourage infants to pat, squish, and track the floating leaves with their eyes and hands during tummy time or seated play.

Autumn Ribbon Pull

Objective: Hand-eye coordination, cause-and-effect understanding, and pincer grasp practice.

Materials Needed: Small cardboard box, ribbon in fall colors (burgundy, gold, orange, brown).

Instructions:

1. Poke pairs of small holes on opposing sides of a clean cardboard box.
2. Thread fall-colored ribbons through and tie bulky knots at both ends so they cannot be pulled completely out.
3. Hand the box to infants to let them pull the ribbons back and forth, observing how moving one side changes the other.

Pumpkin Patch Floor Hop

Objective: Gross motor coordination, balance, and spatial awareness.

Materials Needed: Orange construction paper pumpkin cutouts, painter's tape.

Instructions:

1. Tape large orange paper pumpkins onto the floor a few inches apart in a safe, open area.
2. Play gentle fall background music while guiding toddlers to step, stomp, or hop from pumpkin to pumpkin.
3. Encourage them to act like "rolling pumpkins" or "hopping bunnies" in the pumpkin patch.

Leaf & Texture Contact Paper Board

Objective: Sensory exploration, fine motor release, and vocabulary expansion (sticky, smooth, rough).

Materials Needed: Clear contact paper, painter's tape, real pressed leaves, pieces of orange/yellow burlap or felt.

Instructions:

1. Tape a sheet of contact paper to the wall at toddler eye height, sticky-side facing out.
2. Provide a low basket filled with pressed leaves, burlap scraps, and felt shapes.
3. Let toddlers stick and peel the materials off the contact paper independently.

TWOS

Ages 2–3 Years

Pinecone Sorting & Drop

Objective: Fine motor control, sorting by size, and hand-eye coordination.

Materials Needed: Pinecones of various sizes, plastic tongs or scoops, 2–3 plastic bowls or a muffin tin.

Instructions:

1. Place a pile of pinecones in the center of the table.
2. Model how to pick up pinecones using large tongs or hands and place big ones in one container and small ones in another.
3. Encourage children to practice grabbing, transferring, and dropping them safely into the bins.

Fall Colors Stamping

Objective: Color recognition (red, orange, yellow, brown) and creative artistic expression.

Materials Needed: Empty toilet paper rolls, washable tempera paint (autumn colors), paper plates, heavy white paper.

Instructions:

1. Bend empty toilet paper rolls into a leaf oval shape or fringe the ends to make a fan brush.
2. Pour small dollops of autumn paint onto paper plates.
3. Show the children how to dip the tube into the paint and stamp "fall leaves" all over their paper.

THREES

Ages 3–4 Years

Sand Sensory Bin

Objective: Tactile discrimination, fine motor scoops, and counting sets.

Materials Needed: Large shallow storage bin, sand, scoops, funnel, measuring cups, small plastic pumpkins or acorns.

Instructions:

1. Fill the bottom of the sensory bin with sand.
2. Add measuring cups, scoops, funnels, and mini plastic pumpkins.
3. Guide children to scoop, pour, measure, and hide/find objects hidden within the sand.

Real Leaf Mask Craft

Objective: Fine motor control, scissor skills, and nature-based art creation.

Materials Needed: Sturdy paper plates (cut in half with eye holes cut out), real or silk autumn leaves, glue sticks, craft sticks or ribbon.

Instructions:

1. Pre-cut paper plates into half-moon mask shapes with eye holes.
2. Provide children with a variety of colorful real or silk leaves.
3. Have children glue leaves onto the paper plate, layering them until the surface is covered.
4. Attach a craft stick to the side as a handle (or ribbon ties) so children can hold up their leaf masks!

FOURS

Ages 4–5 Years

Natural Object Patterning

Objective: Pattern recognition, sequencing (AB, AAB, ABC), and natural element sorting.

Materials Needed: Real natural items collected outdoors or from a craft store (acorns, pinecones, twigs, red leaves, yellow leaves).

Instructions:

1. Gather children at a table with small baskets of natural items.
2. Start a pattern on the table (e.g., *Pinecone - Acorn - Pinecone - Acorn*).
3. Ask children to identify what comes next and lay down the matching item to complete and extend the sequence.

Fall Leaf Pounding

Objective: Fine motor control, cause-and-effect exploration, and natural pigment art creation.

Materials Needed: Fresh autumn leaves, white construction paper, toy hammers or metal spoons, sturdy wooden board or table surface (safe for pounding).

Instructions:

1. Place fresh, vibrant leaves face-down on white construction paper over a sturdy, safe wooden pounding surface.
2. Guide children as they carefully pound the leaves using toy hammers or metal spoons.
3. Watch as the natural chlorophyll and pigments transfer onto the white paper to make beautiful leaf prints!

SCHOOL-AGE

Ages 6+ Years

Autumn Leaf Chromatography Experiment

Objective: Scientific exploration, hypothesis creation, and understanding plant pigments (chlorophyll, carotenoids).

Materials Needed: Fresh green and turned fall leaves, rubbing alcohol (supervise directly and keep out of the reach of children), small glass jars, coffee filter strips, craft sticks.

Instructions:

1. Tear leaves into tiny pieces and place them in glass jars grouped by color; cover lightly with rubbing alcohol.
2. Place jars in a shallow bowl of warm water for 20 minutes to extract pigments into the liquid.
3. Hang a strip of coffee filter into the liquid taped to a craft stick resting across the top of the jar.
4. Watch as the alcohol travels up the strip, separating the hidden yellow, orange, and red pigments out of the leaves!

Fall Story Prompts & Creative Writing

Objective: Creative writing, narrative building, and oral language skills.

Materials Needed: Lined paper, pencils, markers, story prompt jar (with hand-written prompt strips like *"The Day the Scarecrow Ran Away"* or *"Lost in the Great Corn Maze"*).

Instructions:

1. Have students pull a story prompt strip out of a jar.
2. Students draft and illustrate an original short fall story based on their prompt.
3. Provide time for students to share their creative stories with the group!

 **Safety Note:** Always supervise children directly when completing activities.