

# Day of Play Newsletter



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**See highlights on the Day of Play website!**



## November 2014 Newsletter!

Here you will find activities in each of the 6 important types of play: reading play, construction play, STEM play, creative arts play, active play and music & dance play that will allow you to continue the learning fun at home! To find out more about the benefits of play, visit the Day of Play website!



## Reading Play

**1. Thanksgiving Vocabulary:** This is an excellent activity for the entire family; to introduce the young kids to Thanksgiving vocabulary, to reinforce words that your Kindergartener or first grader has just learned in school, and to further develop your older child's language skills. With your children, brainstorm Thanksgiving words (and write them down). Encourage them to think in the categories of "food", "Mayflower", "gratitude" and others. Guide them if they need help or keep it relatively simple if they are young, starting with words they know like turkey, pie, pumpkin, family, etc. and introducing them to bigger words like gratitude, pilgrims, football, Plymouth, etc. Once you've created a list, see if your child can make a sentence using 2 of the words listed. If they've mastered that, go on to 3 words and so on. Everyone in the family can take turns making a



Thanksgiving sentence. Finish by having everyone name something they are grateful for this year!

**2. Paper Plate Name Game:** This is a neat activity to do with your child who is just learning letters or learning to read, ages 3-5. Teaching your child the letters of their name is a great way to get them interested in letters and reading and can really spark enthusiasm in literacy! You will need some paper plates, alphabet stickers, a marker, and tape. Start by writing one letter of your child's name in the center of each paper plate. Then apply tape to the back of each plate and hang them on the wall at your child's eye level, spelling out their name. Now comes the fun part - have your child go hunting for the alphabet stickers that make up their name and match the plates, to practice letter recognition. Let them apply stickers to each plate with the correct letter, to develop their fine motor skills. Then, let your child take the marker and practice writing a small letter on each paper plate as well, to practice their writing. Leave the plates up for as long as you want to continue working on this craft - your child will be very proud and excited to see their name and hard work on the wall!

**3. Name Snowmen:** Do this fun craft the last week in November so you can display it during December! You will need construction paper (white, black), googly eyes, buttons/pom poms/other craft accessories, glue, and scissors. Pre-cut medium sized circles out of the white construction paper, and trace a hat shape onto the black paper. Explain that each letter in your child's name would get its own snowball, plus one more for the face. Let your child decorate their snowman's face with buttons, pom poms, and construction paper. Encourage creativity here! Then have your child write each letter of their name on a separate snowball, to practice their writing and familiarity with the letters in their name. Next, its time to build your snowman! Stack the snowballs in order with the head on top and glue or staple them together. This is a super cute craft that helps promote letter recognition and early language skills that is perfect for the holidays!



## Construction Play

**1. Animal Dice:** Build some animal dice with your child for work on motor skills and imaginative play! You will need 2 milk cartons or juice boxes, scissors, glue, construction paper, and animal stickers (or pictures and tape). While your child drinks



the milk or juice, sit down with them and choose their 6 favorite animal stickers or pictures. Once they finish their drink, cut off the tops so that you now have top-less cubes and then rinse the cartons out. Next, have your child slip one carton over the other like a box and lid. Now that you've built the die, cover each side with a square of construction paper with glue. Finally, place a sticker or animal picture on each face of the cube, and you're ready for some pretend play! Roll the dice and act out each animal!

**2. Building Block Maze:** Combine traditional building block play with creative fine motor skill play in this exciting activity! You will need blocks of all shapes and sizes, straws, and a few light balls such as pom-poms or ping pong balls. First, let your child use the blocks to build a simple maze or "racetrack" that is lined with blocks on both sides. It could be a simple loop for younger kids, or the older kids could create a real maze with dead ends and complex patterns. Once the maze has been constructed, have your child place their pom-pom or ball inside the maze, and then use the straw to move it from one end to the other! If multiple kids are playing, have them race, start at opposite ends, chase each other, or time them as they play to add elements of excitement! This is a great activity to spark creativity and develop fine motor skills.

**3. Recyclable Crayon Blocks:** Next time you clean out your old arts and crafts drawer, gather up all the broken crayons and turn them into colorful playing blocks! You will need some old crayons, a knife, and a mini-muffin tin or a (non-plastic) ice cube tray. First, chop up the old crayons into pea-sized pieces, keeping them sorted in piles based on color. Preheat the oven to 150 degrees while you let your child fill the ice cube tray or muffin tin with the color combinations of their choice. Then pop the tray into the oven and wait for the wax to mix and melt! (15-20 minutes) Then let the blocks cool, or stick them in the freezer for a bit and then pop them out. Show your kids how to stack with the cool tie-dye blocks, and even build with some of the whole crayons to see what kind of structures you can come up with. This is a great activity to get kids engaged in block play that also results in more manipulatives for them to learn and play with!



## STEM Play (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)

**1. Sink a Marshmallow:** Next time you're stuck inside and looking for a cool science activity to do with your kids



challenge them to sink a marshmallow! Take out a transparent glass, fill it with water and open a bag of marshmallows. Watch your child drop, throw, submerge, and attempt to sink the marshmallow. It is valuable to let them experiment with all sorts of different ideas before giving them a hint, but make sure to encourage them to keep trying! Then explain to your child that it is floating because of all the air bubbles inside the marshmallow. That should prompt them to try to tear the marshmallow apart and smooth out all the bubbles. Let your child think through this problem and attempt all sorts of solutions, and quit once you've seen the marshmallow stay under for a few seconds!

**2. Wet and Dry:** This is a great scientific game to play with your preschooler or older child. The basic idea is to get kids to see the physical differences between the same objects when they are both wet and dry, and to allow them to observe the transformation! This concept can be understood by even children younger than 2. You will need some small pots and cups, water, and different materials like rice, pasta, stones, sponges, cereal, paper, cotton balls, etc. Start by placing 2 of each material in front of your child, then guide them to put one in the water. Then let them observe, touch, see, and describe the difference! Maybe have your child do a few rounds of this activity with their eyes closed, to really make them rely on their senses and process the differences. Continue this with multiple objects, explaining to your child that when objects absorb water, they expand.

**3. Erupting Snow:** This exciting sensory recipe only requires 2 ingredients - shaving cream and baking soda! First, add the desired amount of baking soda to a container. Next, slowly mix in the shaving cream, creating your own personal snow! This is great sensory play because the snow is soft, smooth, cold and clean. Let your child watch the process and play with the snow! Encourage your child to make snowballs and snowmen and play, adding in some glitter if you want. When it is time to make the snow "erupt" just take out some vinegar, and sprinkle on the snowballs or submerge the snowmen and observe the avalanche that ensues!



## Creative Arts Play

**1. Native American Attire:** As your child learns about the First Thanksgiving they will probably become very interested in



Native Americans, so why not let them create an Indian outfit of their own? For this craft you will need a paper grocery bag, construction paper, paint, feathers, and markers. First, turn the bag inside out so the writing is on the inside. Then cut out holes for your child's arms and head. Next, let your child help ball it up to create a worn "leather" look, being careful not to tear it. Then, lay it flat and let your child decorate with paint. While they are painting, cut a piece of construction paper in half hotdog style, then fold each in half long-ways again to create a headband shape, and tape the 2 pieces together. Let your child decorate this headdress with markers. Then, on the inside of the fold, let your child glue some feathers, then add some more glue on top of those, and fold the flap over to let dry. Once it is dry, tape the headdress together so that it fits your child's head, help him put on the tunic and host your own Thanksgiving feast!

**2. Noodle Turkeys:** You will need corkscrew pasta noodles (different color noodles work great!), white paper, brown construction paper, orange construction paper, red construction paper, glue, googly eyes OR a black marker. Cut a circle out of the brown construction paper for the turkey's body and glue it to the white paper. Next, cut out a smaller brown circle for the head and glue it inside the bigger brown circle. Cut out some legs and a beak from the orange construction paper, glue them to the turkey, and then cut out the turkey's wattle (attached to the neck) from the red construction paper and glue that to the turkey's head. Add some eyes with the black marker, then ask your child what he or she is most grateful for this Thanksgiving. Have them write "I'm thankful for \_\_\_\_\_" on the bottom of the paper. This is a fun way to work on your child's fine motor skills, writing, and creativity while discussing with the meaning behind Thanksgiving!

**3. Thanksgiving Wreath:** Make a cute personalized Thanksgiving wreath with your child using construction paper, scissors, glue, a pencil, and a marker. First, trace your child's hand onto fall colored construction paper (red, yellow, orange, green, brown) with the pencil, drawing 12 hands. Then have your child cut each handprint out and form a wreath shape with them. Next, help your child write the names of the month on each handprint, starting with January at the top and going clockwise. Then ask your child to write one thing they are grateful for each month on the correct handprint. Finally, glue the handprints together to form a wreath and hang it up on the fridge, door, or wall. This is a great exercise to practice handwriting, fine motor skills, and to discuss and develop



gratitude!



## Active Play

**1. Turkey Toss of Thankfulness:** A great way to get in the Thanksgiving spirit is by spending some time with your family reflecting on the things in your life you are grateful for. For this activity you will need a brown paper bag, orange construction paper, googly eyes, glue, and feathers (if you don't have feathers, you can cut your own from colored construction paper). First, cut the brown paper bag down to a smaller size and crumple it up into a ball for the turkey's body. Then cut a beak out of the orange construction paper, and glue it on the turkey. Next, glue on some googly eyes (or draw your own). Finally, glue on the feathers to the back of the turkey. Simple! Now, gather the family and have a game of catch, tossing the turkey back and forth - but whoever catches the turkey has to say what they are grateful for. This is an awesome way to spend a nice night with the family appreciating all that you have! It is also a fun craft, and a hidden way to work on your child's motor skills and hand-eye coordination.

**2. Balloon Badminton:** To get your kids active on a cold winter day, try this fun craft and game! All you need is paper plates, popsicle sticks, markers, balloons, and a stapler (or tape). Start by letting your kids decorate their paper plates, which will become their badminton rackets. Then staple (or tape) the popsicle stick to the back to use as a handle. Blow up a few balloons and let your kids whack the balloon back and forth to each other! Let them see how long they can keep the balloon in the air, both together and by themselves. They will love this game and get creative, so encourage their imaginations! This is a fun way to get the kids moving and practicing their gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination and balance!

**3. Color Hopscotch:** For this classic activity, all you will need is some construction paper of various colors and tape. Set up the sheets of construction paper on the floor and tape the edges to the ground. Let your child make the rules or you can make them up together. Start by calling out a color name and having your child hop to that color! If that gets old, give your child a marker and decorate the squares with letters or numbers, and continue to play. This is a very simple way to get your kids active while working on color, letter, or number



recognition, and developing their gross motor skills and balance.



## Music & Dance Play

**1. Seasons Song:** Teach this song to your 3-7 year old and have them sing along with you! This song about the changing seasons is a great way to teach kids about nature and the changes we see every year, and should spark an interest in the outdoors!

Winter comes with the first frost,  
Now the leaves are bare,  
We can sing of seasons,  
Snow falls in the air.  
Winter leaves us and then Spring comes,  
Bringing new leaves of green,  
We can sing of seasons,  
Seasons in between.  
Summer's bringing some warm sunshine,  
Playing outside with our friends,  
We can sing of seasons,  
Hope it never ends!  
Summer's over then Autumn comes,  
Painting the trees with gold,  
We can sing of seasons,  
Then the wind turns cold.  
Seasons turn around every year,  
Like a rolling wheel,  
We can sing of seasons,  
Happy we all feel!

**2. Bath Time Song:** Multitask with this fun and educational song! Singing with your child in the bath is not only fun and relaxing but it will teach them about cleanliness and increase their enthusiasm for bath time! Sing this with your 3-6 year old.

Splish, splash, splosh,  
Singing in the tub,  
Find the soap, give it a rub,  
And give yourself a wash.  
Splosh, splish, splash,  
Making lots of suds,  
Take the shower, rinse it off,  
You're ready in a flash!

**3. The Tissue Dance:** This simple dance activity is a fun way to teach posture, body control, balance, and concentration and



is sure to be a hit with all the kids! Give your child a tissue to place on their head before the music starts. Then put on a favorite tune of your child's and have them start to dance - but be careful not to let the tissue fall off their head! They can catch it if it starts to fall, but if it hits the ground that round is over! Continue playing until your little one is wiped out.



Created by Caroline McCabe