



Fall Packet



Fall Exploration (What's Included!)

- Introduction to the Unit of Investigation
- Vocabulary Words
- Songs to Sing
- Books to Read
- Expanded Play & Experiential Learning
- 12 Activities (Including Materials Needed, Directions to Follow, and Targeted Learning Objectives)



Introduction: Falling into Autumn

Autumn is a fun time for toddlers to explore the world around them. As the leaves turn bright colors and fall to the ground, toddlers can enjoy picking them up and playing with them, noticing how the leaves are different from each other. This simple activity helps them learn about trees and the changing seasons in a way they can easily understand.

They can also see pumpkins growing in gardens and get excited about turning them into jack-o'-lanterns for Halloween. Watching the wind blow leaves around or feeling the cool breeze on their faces shows toddlers how the weather changes during autumn. Feeling the cool air and wearing cozy clothes like sweaters and scarves helps them notice how the weather changes and what we do differently because of it. Going on nature walks during autumn lets toddlers experience all these things up close, making it a special way for them to connect with the world around them.

When administering activities, it's important to re-offer the same activities several times over. This allows children the opportunity to make deep connections, comprehend uses and properties, while contributing to mastery and memory recall. And keep in mind that learning is not confined to a specific time, place, or activity. It's an ongoing journey where connections are woven through daily interactions and engagement with the people, places, and materials that surround us.



Vocabulary Words

New & relative vocabulary words to incorporate in everyday experiences: In addition to incorporating the vocabulary words provided below, try to speak as you go! Talking to children as you go is one of the most powerful ways to expand upon receptive and expressive language development. The more language children are exposed to (when used in meaningful and relative context) the greater it contributes to language and future literacy skills.

- Apple
- Pumpkin
- Leaf
- Crunchy
- Rake
- Sweater
- Scarf
- Boots
- Windy
- Rainy
- Cloudy
- Squirrel
- Acorn
- Pinecone
- Harvest
- Corn
- Haystack
- Scarecrow
- Forest
- Pile
- Red
- Orange
- Yellow
- Brown
- Jack-o'-lantern
- Bonfire
- Crisp
- Basket
- Cider
- Candle
- Wagon
- Farm
- Night
- Glow
- Hayride
- Maze
- Barn
- Woods
- Cozy
- Crispy



Songs to Sing

Singing with children is a multifaceted tool for development, enhancing language skills through exposure to varied vocabulary and rhythms. The rhythmic and melodic nature aids memory, making learning engaging. Beyond cognitive benefits, singing promotes emotional expression, fostering a holistic growth experience.

"Falling Leaves"

(To the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

Falling leaves, all around,
In the trees and on the ground.
Autumn colors, red and gold,
Gentle breezes, not too cold.

Falling leaves, softly sway,
On this lovely autumn day.
In the trees and on the ground,
Falling leaves, all around.

"Pumpkin, Pumpkin"

(To the tune of "London Bridge Is Falling Down")

Pumpkin, pumpkin, big and round,
Big and round, big and round.
Pumpkin, pumpkin, big and round,
Orange in the patch.

Pumpkin, pumpkin, on the ground,
On the ground, on the ground.
Pumpkin, pumpkin, on the ground,
Let's pick it up.

"Five Little Pumpkins"

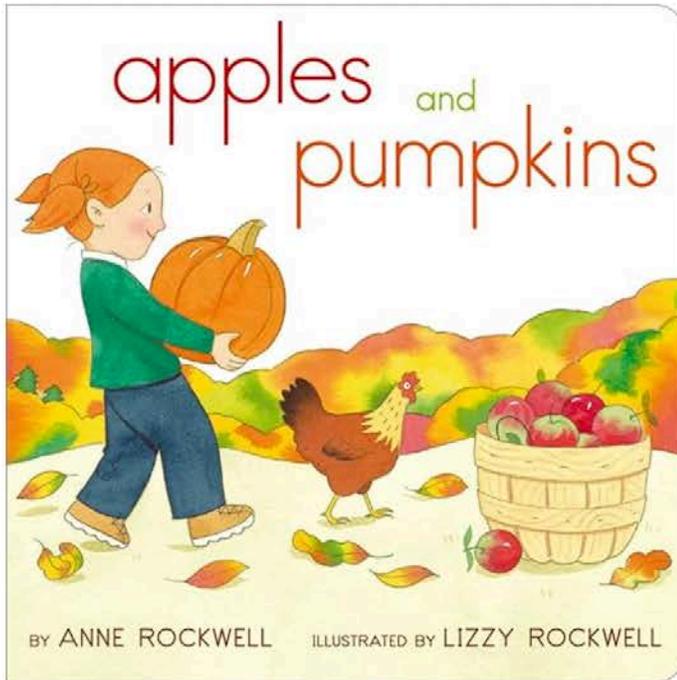
Five little pumpkins sitting on a gate,
The first one said, "Oh my, it's getting late."
The second one said, "There are witches in the air."
The third one said, "But we don't care."
The fourth one said, "Let's run, let's run!"
The fifth one said, "It's Halloween fun."
Then, "Woo-oo-oo" went the wind,
And out went the lights,
And the five little pumpkins rolled out of sight.

Disclaimer: We Skoolhouse does not own the lyrics to any of the songs provided.

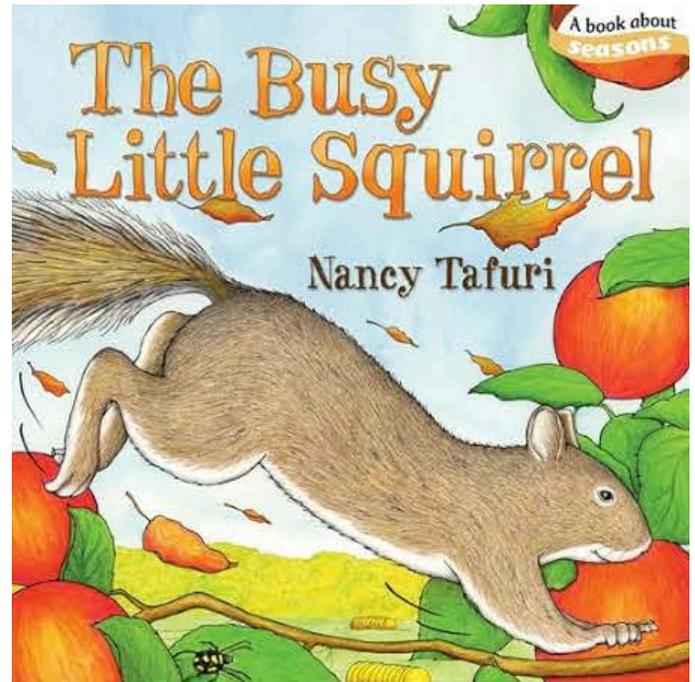


Books to Read

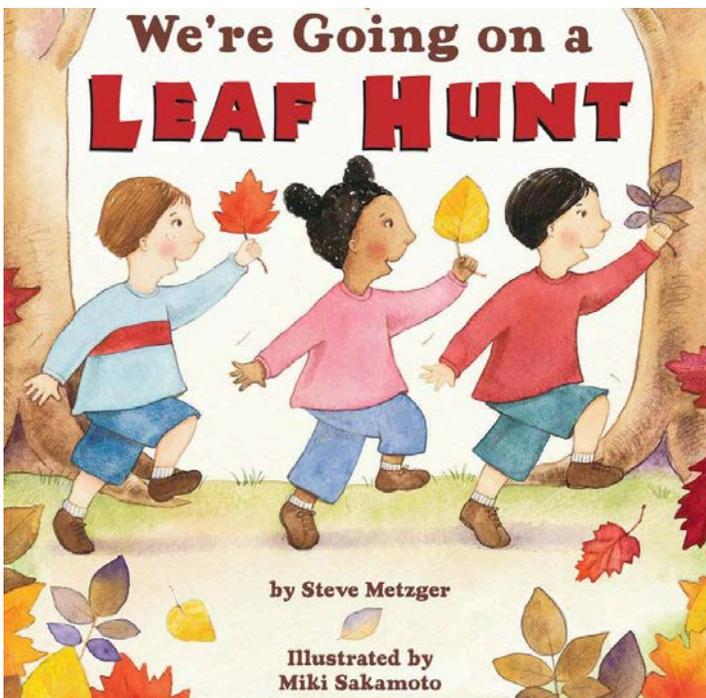
We select two books to support your unit of investigation - it's important to go slow and re-read the same books several times for greater comprehension and connection building. You can read the recommended book before they begin the hands-on work. We understand all children have different preferences and interests when it comes to books (and everything else), so please find our supplemental reads that can replace or add to the suggested books below:



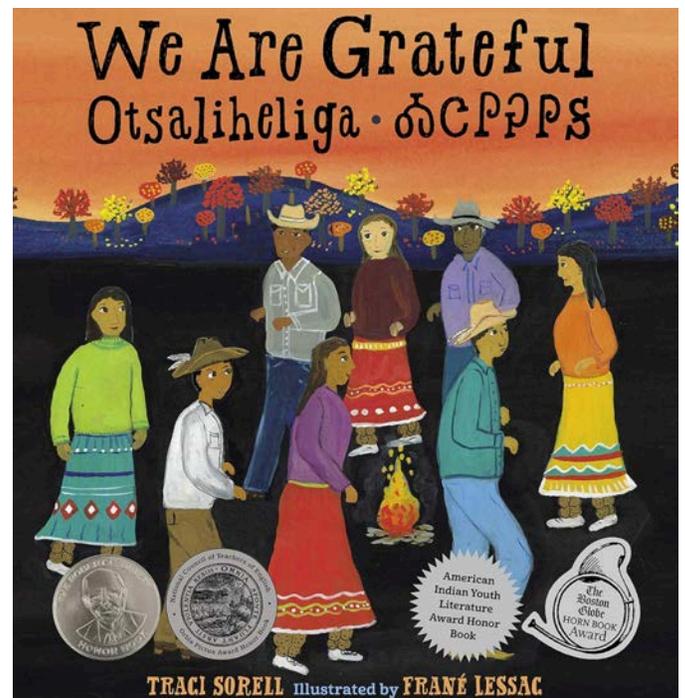
Apples and Pumpkins, by Anne Rockwell



The Busy Little Squirrel, by Nancy Tafuri



We're Going on a Leaf Hunt, by Steve Metzger



We Are Grateful, by Traci Sorell

Expanded Play & Experiential Learning

Learning concepts are best adopted when children can make everyday and tangible connections. Support your child's emergent knowledge and experiences by incorporating the topic in different areas of play and exploration.

- **Autumn-inspired Play**

- Incorporate autumn artifacts within the learning environment (and/or different centers of your classroom).
 - Consider: pumpkins, gourds, apples, leaves, twigs, pinecones, cinnamon sticks, bags, scales, pincers, magnifying glasses, thematic stories, etc.



- **Delicious Snacks & Meals**

- Utilize seasonal foods and invite children to help prepare different snacks and meals. Consider:
 - Applesauce, pies, baked pumpkin seeds, baked apple chips, pumpkin muffins, butternut squash soup, etc.
 - Older children may deliver special made treats to others to expand upon community



- **Get Outside & Embrace the Season**

- Visit local farms and orchards to observe the actual apple trees and pumpkin patches.
- Bring bales of hay to your own yard and create obstacle course/mazes.
- Invite children to pile-up leaves and jump on it! They can also be invited to rake-up/clean-up leaves and collect leaves for future activities.



ACTIVITIES





Leaf Pile-up Play!

MATERIALS

- Rake or leaf blower (for collecting leaves)
- A pile of autumn leaves (collected from a yard or park)
- Optional: Large plastic or fabric tarp
- Optional: Toy or child-sized tools such as a rake or shovel.

DIRECTIONS

- Using a rake or leaf blower, collect a generous pile of fallen leaves from your yard or a nearby park. Ensure the area is free of any sharp objects or debris. Invite your children to help collect leaves as well.
- Optional: Lay a large plastic or fabric tarp on the ground. This will serve as the base for your leaf pile-up play area.
- Gather the leaves into a mound on the tarp. Make it a manageable size for the child to jump into safely.
- While playing, discuss spatial concepts like "in," "on," "under," and "around" as they navigate the leaf pile. Ask questions like, "Can you jump over the leaves?" or "Can you find leaves to hide under?"
- Once playtime is over, assist your children in cleaning up the leaves by carefully folding the tarp to collect them. You can also use a child-sized rake or your hands for this.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Gross Motor:** Jumping, stomping, and moving in the leaf pile enhances gross motor skills, strength, balance, coordination, and spatial awareness.
- **Sensory Regulation:** Jumping in leaves provides sensory input through tactile sensations and proprioceptive feedback (the awareness of one's body in space). This can have a calming and regulating effect on a child's nervous system, helping them self-regulate and manage emotions.
- **Confidence Building:** Successfully navigating a leaf pile, making decisions about how to jump, and experimenting with different movements can boost a child's self-confidence. It shows them that they are capable of achieving physical feats and making choices.



Autumn Window Art

MATERIALS

- Clear contact paper
- Fall leaves (collected by children)
- Scissors (for adult use)
- Painter's tape or masking tape
- Window (or large glass surface)
- Optional: small twigs or additional (flat & light-weight) nature items

DIRECTIONS

- Cut a large piece of clear contact paper to fit the chosen window or glass surface. Peel off the backing and tape the sticky side facing outward onto the window using painter's tape.
- Take the children on a nature walk to collect various fall leaves. Discuss the different colors, shapes, and sizes of the leaves as they gather them.
- Invite the children to press their collected leaves onto the sticky side of the contact paper. Encourage them to arrange the leaves in patterns, or simply explore the sensory experience of sticking and moving the leaves around. Optional: Add glitter or small twigs to enhance the design.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Sensory Exploration:** Children will develop sensory awareness by exploring the textures of the leaves, the stickiness of the contact paper, and the smooth surface of the window. This activity engages children's senses through touch, helping them to understand and differentiate between various textures and sensations, which is foundational for sensory processing and cognitive development.
- **Focus and Attention:** Children will develop focus and attention as they concentrate on placing the leaves onto the contact paper. This activity encourages sustained engagement, helping children build the ability to focus on a task, follow through, and practice patience—skills that are critical for learning and problem-solving.
- **Problem-Solving:** Children will practice problem-solving by deciding how to arrange the leaves on the contact paper and dealing with any challenges that arise, such as limited space or overlapping leaves. This process helps them develop critical thinking skills, make decisions, and explore different strategies, all of which are important for cognitive development and resilience.



Leaf Stamping

MATERIALS

- Leaves (various shapes and sizes)
- Washable paint
- Paper or cardstock
- Paper towels or old newspaper for covering the work area
- Optional: Paintbrush, smocks or aprons to protect clothing
- Water and a container for rinsing brushes (if used)

DIRECTIONS

- Go on a nature walk with your children to collect a variety of leaves. Discuss the different shapes and sizes of the leaves and the colors they see.
- Set Up the Paint: Pour small amounts of paint onto disposable plates or palette trays. You can use fall colors like red, orange, yellow, green, and brown.
- Children can either dip the leaves directly into the paint or use paintbrushes to apply paint to the leaves.
- Once the leaves are coated with paint, children can press the painted side of the leaf onto the paper or cardstock. Press firmly but not too hard to avoid tearing the leaf. Lift the leaf carefully to reveal the stamped design.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Leaf stamping is an excellent way to introduce children to the changing seasons, particularly the beauty of fall. This contributes to an **appreciation for nature** by collecting leaves and observing their different shapes, sizes, and colors.
- **Promotes fine motor skill development** as children handle leaves and paintbrushes with precision.
- Children will **express their creativity** by choosing colors and experimenting with different leaf stamping patterns.
- Painting and stamping with leaves **provide a sensory-rich experience** as children feel the textures of the leaves and the paint.



Autumn Collage

MATERIALS

- Assorted leaves of different shapes, sizes, and colors
- Construction paper or sturdy cardstock as the background
- White glue or glue sticks
- Optionals
 - Markers or crayons (adding details)
 - Scissors
 - Natural artifacts such as sticks, acorns, pinecones, etc.
 - Reference book or images of "Leaf Man" by Lois Ehlert (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- Go on a nature walk with your children to collect a variety of leaves. Encourage them to choose leaves that capture their interest in terms of size, shape, and color.
- Provide each child with a sheet of construction paper or cardstock, as well as the collected leaves and glue
- Allow your children to begin arranging the collected leaves on the construction paper to create.
- After the leaves are attached, children can use markers or crayons to add additional details to their paper.
- Once dry, display the collages in the classroom or find a place within the home to display.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Creativity and Imagination:** Encourage children to use their imagination to design a unique Leaf Man character, fostering creativity and creative thinking skills.
- **Storytelling and Narrative Skills:** Encourage children to create stories or descriptions for their Leaf Man characters, developing their narrative and storytelling abilities.
- **Critical Observation:** This activity prompts children to closely observe and compare various leaf shapes, colors, and sizes, improving their critical observation skills.



Autumn Inspired Sensory Table

MATERIALS

- Base Materials: Choose a base material for the sensory table, such as:
 - Sand, oats, dried rice, cornmeal, shredded paper
- Natural Artifacts:
 - E.g. Autumn leaves (various shapes and colors), pinecones, sticks and twigs, acorns, etc.
- Sensory Tools (optional):
 - Small scoops or tongs, magnifying glasses, containers, spoons, etc.

DIRECTIONS

- Prepare the sensory table by filling it with the chosen base material (sand, oats, dried rice, etc.). Distribute the natural artifacts evenly throughout the base material to create an engaging and exploratory environment.
- Allow children to use their hands or sensory tools to explore the base materials and natural artifacts. Encourage them to dig through the base material to find and examine the leaves, pinecones, sticks, and other items.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Sensory Exploration:** Children will engage their senses—touch, sight, and sometimes smell—by exploring various base materials and natural artifacts. This enhances their sensory awareness and provides rich, hands-on learning experiences.
- **Understanding Seasons:** By exploring autumn-themed materials, children learn about the characteristics and changes associated with the autumn season. They gain an understanding of how natural artifacts like leaves and pinecones fit into the seasonal cycle.
- **Scientific Inquiry:** The sensory table fosters curiosity and scientific inquiry as children investigate the properties of different materials and artifacts. They learn to ask questions, make observations, and draw conclusions based on their findings. This also welcomes encourages children to experiment with different materials and tools, allowing them to learn through trial and error. They discover cause-and-effect relationships as they see how their actions produce different outcomes.
- **Focus and Attention:** As children engage with the sensory table, they practice maintaining focus and attention on the task at hand. This helps improve their ability to concentrate and stay engaged with activities.



Sensory Painting with Autumn-inspired Colors

MATERIALS

- Large sheet/s of white paper or a roll of butcher paper
- Baby-safe, non-toxic paint in autumn colors (e.g., red, orange, yellow, brown, purple)
- Optional: Paintbrush or a small pumpkin as a "stamper."

DIRECTIONS

- Lay out the paper in a comfortable location for your children to work (e.g. high chair, table, floor, etc.)
- If there is loose paper, you may consider taping it down so it doesn't move as your child paints.
- Put out a few autumn-inspired colors for your children to touch, explore, and paint with.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Exploring painting **encourages observations, experimentation, and the understanding of cause-and-effect relationships.** Children learn that their actions create changes on the paper, promoting cognitive growth.
- Painting involves **fine and gross motor skills** as children grasp brushes or use their limbs, hands, and fingers to make deliberate movements. This **enhances hand-eye coordination, muscle control, and the development of a pincer grasp,** which is vital for later writing skills.
- The tactile experience of paint on their hands and the physical activity involved in painting can **help children expend excess energy in an enjoyable way.** For some, the soothing rhythm of painting can **help calm and regulate, while creating a sense of focus.**
- Young children can **communicate through their art** while verbalizing their observation, while caregivers can engage in dialogue about their creations. Describing colors, shapes, motions, and the painting process **builds early vocabulary.**



Autumn Suncatchers

MATERIALS

- Cellophane sheets in various colors (orange, green, purple, etc.)
- Contact paper or clear adhesive shelf liner
- Black construction paper
- Scissors
 - Optional: Child-friendly scissors so children can practice cutting too!
- Transparent adhesive tape
- Optional: hole-puncher, yarn, or string

DIRECTIONS

- Cut a piece of contact paper or adhesive shelf liner to the desired size for the sun-catcher. A square or rectangle shape works well.
- Cut a piece of black construction paper into a border shape that matches the size of the contact paper. The border provides a frame for the sun-catcher.
- Carefully peel the backing off one side of the contact paper, leaving the sticky side exposed. Attach the border to the sheet of contact paper with tape.
- Lay the sticky side of the contact paper facing up on a flat surface. You can secure it to the table with some transparent tape to prevent it from moving.
- You and your children can cut small pieces of cellophane in various shapes and sizes. The pieces should be small enough to fit on the contact paper.
- Let your children arrange the cellophane pieces however they'd like on the sticky side of the contact paper.
- If you wish to hang the sun-catcher(s), punch a hole at the top and thread a piece of yarn or string through it.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Sorting and selecting cellophane pieces **allows children to identify and learn about different colors.**
- Children experience the **tactile sensation** of cellophane as they observe the range of transparent colors, while feeling the varying textures of cellophane compared to the (sticky) contact paper.
- Cutting the cellophane pieces and arranging them on the contact paper all contribute to the **development of fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and spatial awareness.**
- This activity **encourages creativity and artistic expression** as children choose colors and shapes for their suncatcher.



Harvest Basket Exploration

MATERIALS

- A small, shallow basket or container
- Assortment of seasonal fruits and vegetables (e.g. apples, pears, pumpkins, gourds, etc.)

DIRECTIONS

- Select a variety of fruits and vegetables that are safe and suitable for toddlers. Wash and dry them thoroughly.
- Set Up the Exploration Area: Place the shallow basket or container on a stable surface.
- Encourage your toddler to explore the items in the basket. Discuss the different colors, shapes, and textures they observe.
- Ask questions and have conversations about what they're experiencing. For example, "How does the pumpkin feel?"

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Toddlers will engage their sense of touch, smell, and taste as they explore the different fruits and vegetables, **promoting sensory development.**
- Opportunities to explore **mathematical concepts** such as counting, sorting, and categorizing items in the basket.
- Encourages and incorporates new vocabulary as toddlers learn the names, colors, and textures of the fruits and vegetables, **supporting language development.**
- Picking up and handling the items in the basket helps develop fine and gross motor skills, balance, and hand-eye coordination.
- Allowing children to choose items from the harvest basket **fosters autonomy.** They **make decisions** about what they want to explore, **encouraging independence and a sense of control** over their choices.



Pumpkin Painting

MATERIALS

- Pumpkins
- Non-toxic, washable paint
- Paintbrushes (child-friendly and easy to grip)
- Optional: Water and sponge
- Apron, smock, or old t-shirt.
- A drop cloth, newspaper, or paper towel
- Baby wipes or damp cloths for quick clean-up

DIRECTIONS

- Lay down a drop cloth, newspaper, or paper towel to protect the work area from paint spills. Place the pumpkin, paint, paintbrush within easy reach for your child.
- Have children wear child-sized aprons or old t-shirts to protect their clothing from paint.
- Let children explore and paint in their own way!

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Engages the sense of touch as toddlers feel the different textures of the paint, paintbrushes, and the pumpkin's surface, **promoting sensory awareness.**
- Encourages toddlers to explore and experiment with art materials, **promoting a sense of curiosity and innovation,** while expressing themselves creatively by choosing paint colors, making design decisions, and creating unique pumpkin artwork.
- Toddlers will refine their **fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination** as they grasp paintbrushes and carefully apply paint to the pumpkins, while strengthening their limbs as they maneuver their shoulder and arm.
- Fosters a **sense of pride and accomplishment** as toddlers see their finished pumpkin creations and proudly display their artwork. This **boosts their self-esteem and self-confidence.**



Pumpkin Exploration

MATERIALS

- A small to medium-sized pumpkin.
- Child-safe cutting tools (for adults to use).
- Optional: Sensory tools such as plastic tweezers, scoops, or a magnifying glass
- Optional: Markers or stickers
- Optional: Ziplock bag or bowl/tray for exploration

DIRECTIONS

- Place the whole pumpkin in a well-lit area where children can observe it.
- Encourage toddlers to look at the pumpkin, touch its surface, and describe what they see. This initial observation helps with sensory exploration and descriptive language development.
- You can provide markers or stickers to let children decorate the pumpkin.
- After some time, cut the pumpkin open exposing the seeds and flesh. Ensure children are at a safe distance during this process.
- Invite your child to witness the pumpkin being cut. Discuss the change in appearance and encourage them to touch the pumpkin's flesh and seeds, noting the textures and smells.
- Invite your child to help scoop out some of the pumpkin's seeds and flesh, placing them in a ziplock bag.
- Encourage children to engage in sensory play by squishing, squeezing, or transferring the pumpkin guts (before and after the "guts" are in the bag.)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- This activity **promotes sensory exploration** by allowing toddlers to engage their sense of touch, sight, and smell as they observe and handle the pumpkin.
- Encouraging toddlers to describe the pumpkin's appearance and the sensations they experience during the gut exploration phase **enhances their vocabulary and communication skills.**
- The exploration of a pumpkin **offers insights into nature, plant biology, and the concept of "inside" & "outside."**
- Encourages toddlers to **make observations, ask questions, and explore the world around them**, fostering curiosity.
- The hands-on exploration of the pumpkin and its guts **promotes a sense of scientific inquiry and discovery.**
- When using scooping tools, toddlers **practice fine motor skills like coordination, control, and dexterity.**



Pumpkin Scented Play Dough

MATERIALS

- 1 cup of all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup of salt
- 2 teaspoons of cream of tartar
- 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil
- 1 cup of water
- Orange food coloring (optional, for color)
- Pumpkin pie spice (for scent)
- Mixing bowl
- Saucepan
- Whisk
- Optional: Tools to support play; rolling pin, child-safe knife, autumn elements (pinecones, acorns, sticks, etc.)

DIRECTIONS

- **Invite your children to help you measure out, pour, and mix ingredients!**
- **Dry Ingredients:** In a mixing bowl, combine the flour, salt, and cream of tartar. Mix them together thoroughly.
- **Wet Ingredients:** In a saucepan, add the water and vegetable oil. If you want to add color, put a few drops of orange food coloring into the liquid mixture. Stir well.
- **Combine and Heat:** Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients. Mix everything until it forms a lumpy dough.
- **Cook the Dough:** Place the saucepan over low-medium heat. Stir continuously until the mixture thickens and forms a dough-like consistency. This should take about 3-5 minutes.
- **Add Pumpkin Scent:** Remove saucepan from heat. While the dough is still warm, sprinkle in some pumpkin pie spice. Start with a small amount and add more if you'd like a stronger scent. Knead until evenly distributed.
- **Cool and Play:** Allow the pumpkin-scented play dough to cool down. Once it's safe to touch, take it out of the saucepan and knead it until it's smooth and pliable. If it's too sticky, add a little more flour.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develops sensory awareness by feeling and smelling the pumpkin-scented play dough, **promoting sensory processing and self-regulation.**
- Develops **focus, planning, and sequencing abilities** as children think through the steps needed to create specific play dough designs or objects.
- Fosters **creativity and imaginative play** as children use the play dough to sculpt various objects.



Autumn Inspired Sculptures

MATERIALS

- Play Dough (seasonal color(s))
- Autumn Elements: small pinecones, acorns, leaves (real or faux), twigs - be conscious of items that are a choking hazard.
 - You can also opt for a "Halloween Theme": Black pipe-cleaners, googly eyes, etc.
- Tools for Exploration (Optional):
- Rolling pins, cookie cutters (various shapes, including leaf and pumpkin shapes), plastic knives

DIRECTIONS

- Arrange all materials on a large, clean workspace or table. Place the play dough, autumn elements, and tools where children can easily reach them.
- Exploration: Allow children to:
 - Squish, roll, and manipulate the play dough using their hands and tools.
 - Press autumn elements into the play dough
 - Experiment with combining different colors and textures.
 - Use the tools to cut, shape, and press the play dough.
- Remember children this age are not expected to make something concrete, but rather explore and experiment with the materials at hand.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Sensory Exploration:** Children will enhance their sensory experiences by exploring the tactile qualities of play dough and natural elements.
- **Creativity and Imagination:** Children will use their creativity to experiment with various ways to manipulate and combine materials without focusing on specific outcomes.
- **Fine Motor Skills:** Manipulating play dough with tools will help children develop fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- **Pattern Recognition and Texture Exploration:** By pressing and rolling autumn elements into the play dough, children will explore patterns and textures, promoting cognitive and sensory development.
- **Problem-Solving:** Children will engage in problem-solving as they figure out how to use tools and materials to achieve their desired effects with the play dough.



MADE FOR CHILDREN. DESIGNED FOR YOU.

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