



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 wonderful time for children to learn about the natural world through hands-on experiences. As leaves turn vibrant colors, children can observe how this change happens and discover why trees shed their leaves. Picking up and examining fallen leaves provides a practical lesson in plant life cycles and the seasons.

Children can also learn about the life cycle of pumpkins, from growing on vines to becoming part of autumn celebrations like carving jack-o'-lanterns. Watching animals like squirrels gather nuts and birds migrate can teach about how creatures adapt to the changing seasons. The cool, crisp air and new clothing like sweaters and scarves offer opportunities to explore how different weather affects our daily lives. Nature walks in the autumn allow children to experience these changes directly, helping them understand the environment and the fascinating ways it transforms throughout the year.

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.

- Autumn
- Fall
- Leaves
- Pumpkin
- Apple
- Harvest
- Cider
- Pie
- Corn
- Squash
- Acorn
- Nut
- Squirrel
- Tree
- Branch
- Rake
- Sweater
- Scarf
- Cool
- Breeze
- Windy
- Crisp
- Mushroom
- Pinecone
- Sunset
- Bonfire
- Hay
- Field
- Frost
- Owl
- Crows
- Jack-o'-lantern
- Hayride
- Maple
- Hike
- Chilly
- Equinox
- Decay
- Tawny
- Gourd



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.

"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 and run and run."
The fifth one said, "I'm ready for some fun."
Then "whoosh" went the wind, and out went the lights,
And the five little pumpkins rolled out of sight.

"Autumn Leaves Are Falling"

(Verse 1)
Autumn leaves are falling down, (Flutter hands down like falling leaves)
Falling down, falling down,
Autumn leaves are falling down,
All around the town.

(Verse 2)
Rake them up into a mound, (Pretend to rake leaves)
Mound, mound, mound,
Rake them up into a mound,
All around the town.

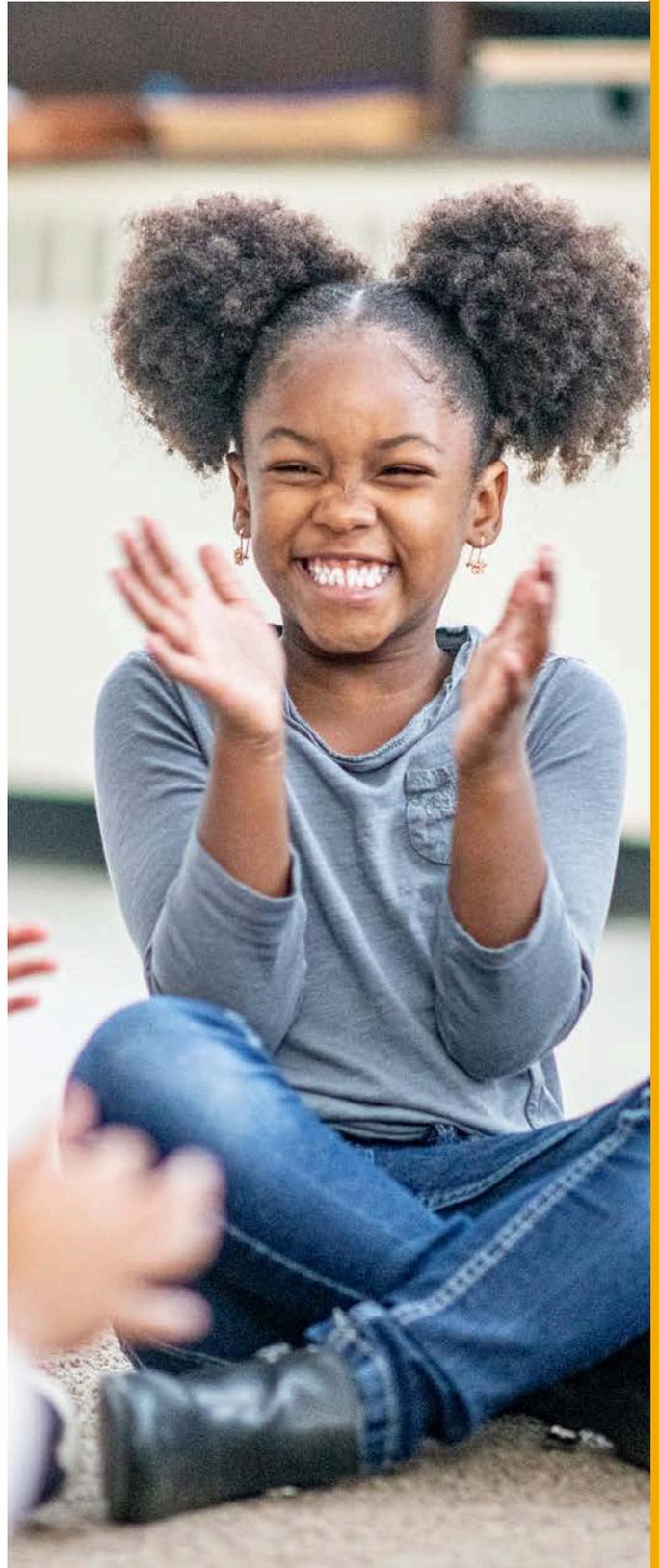
(Verse 3)
Jump into the leaves and play, (Jump into imaginary leaves)
Play, play, play,
Jump into the leaves and play,
All around the town.

"The Harvest Song" (To the tune of "The Wheels on the Bus")

The farmers in the field, they work so hard,
Work so hard, work so hard.
The farmers in the field, they work so hard,
In the autumn sun.

They pick the apples from the tree, from the tree, from the tree,
They pick the apples from the tree, one by one.
The farmers in the field, they work so hard,
In the autumn sun.

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

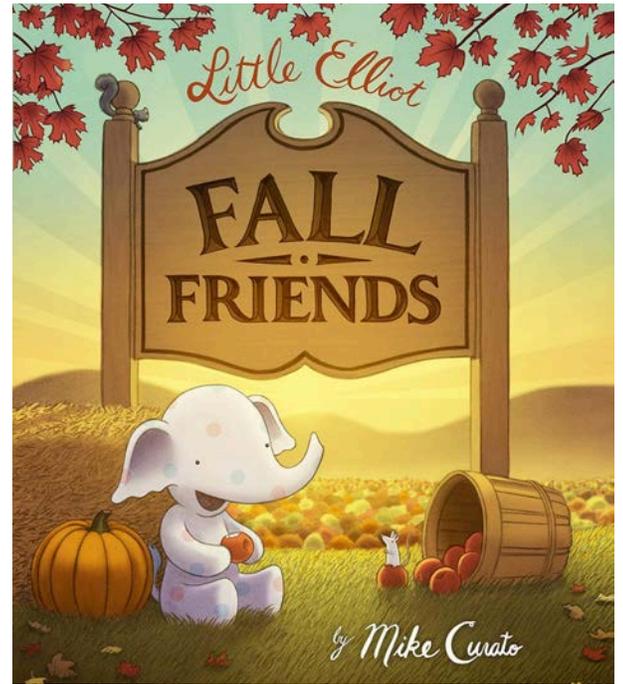


Books to Read

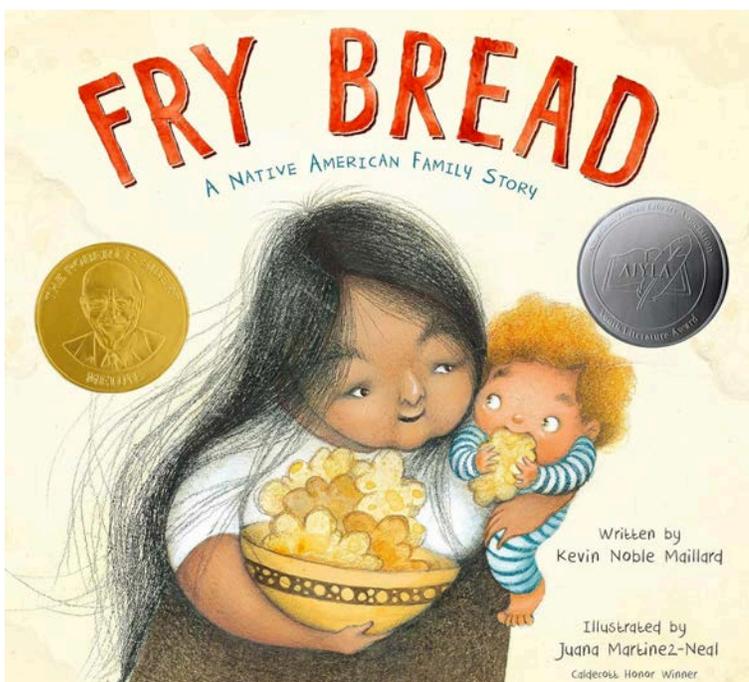
We select two books to support your unit of investigation - it's important to go slow and re-read the same books several times for greater comprehension and connection building. You can read the recommended book before they begin the hands-on work. We understand all children have different preferences 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:



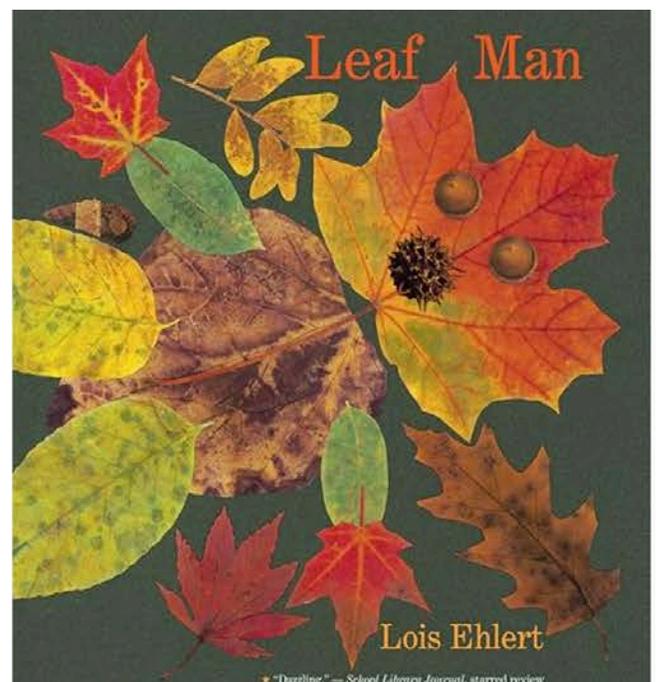
Goodbye Summer, Hello Autumn, by Kenard Pak



Fall Friends, by Mike Curato



Fry Bread, by Kevin Noble Maillard



Leaf Man, by Lois Ehlert

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





Investigating the Parts of an Apple

MATERIALS

- Fresh apples (one per child or group)
- Plastic knives or apple slicers
- Markers or pens
- Large sheet of paper
- Magnifying glasses (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- Allow children to explore the apple (before cutting it open) and invite them to consider, " what does the inside of an apple look like?"
- Welcome children to share what they already know about apples, including the different parts.
- Depending on the children's ages and abilities they may be able to begin cutting apples open or you may create smaller pieces that they can further cut too.
 - Guide children to carefully cut the apple in half using the plastic knife. Allow them to explore the inside of the apple to observe its different parts.
- Help children identify and label the apple's different parts: skin, flesh, core, seeds, and stem and allow them to use magnifying glasses to closely examine the details of each part of the apple.
- If children are able to, welcome them to write or draw the names of the apple parts on their labels or the large apple graph.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Identification:** Children will be able to recognize and name the basic parts of an apple, including the skin, flesh, core, seeds, and stem. This objective helps them understand the structure of the apple and the role each part plays in the apple's growth and development.
- **Observation Skills:** By using magnifying glasses to closely examine the apple's details, children will enhance their observation skills. This activity encourages careful attention to detail and fosters curiosity about how objects are constructed and how they function.
- **Labeling and Organization:** As children label the different parts of the apple, they will practice organizing and categorizing information. This helps them develop skills in both written and visual communication, reinforcing their understanding of the apple's anatomy and functions.
- **Understanding Function:** Children will gain an understanding of the function of each part of the apple. For example, they will learn that the skin protects the apple, the flesh provides nutrients, the core contains the seeds, and the stem connects the apple to the tree. This objective helps children connect the physical structure of the apple with its biological functions and overall growth process



Cast Your Vote - Apple Edition!

MATERIALS

- Various types of apples (e.g., Granny Smith, Fuji, Gala, Honeycrisp)
- A large chart or poster board
- Markers or pens
- Paper for children's pictures (construction paper or pre-printed photo templates)
- Crayons, colored pencils, or markers for decorating
- Glue or tape
- Labels for apple types (optional)
- Scissors (to cut out pictures)

DIRECTIONS

- Introduce the different types of apples to the children, explaining their unique features and tastes. Show the apples and discuss their colors, shapes, and flavors. Allow for sample tasting!
- Place the apples in front of the children and set up the chart or poster board where the voting will take place. Ensure each apple type has a corresponding section on the chart or poster.
- Have each child draw or color a picture of their favorite type of apple. Provide paper and art supplies for this activity. Alternatively, if using pre-printed photo templates, have children add their name or image and color/decorate the pictures.
- Once the pictures are ready, children will glue or tape their pictures next to their chosen type of apple on the chart. This action represents their vote for their favorite apple type.
- After all votes have been cast, review the chart with the children. Discuss which apple type received the most votes and talk about the different preferences and reasons behind their choices.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Math Concepts:** The voting activity introduces basic math concepts such as counting and comparing quantities. Children will count the number of votes each apple type receives and compare the totals to determine which apple is the most popular. This helps them develop early math skills related to counting, data collection, and understanding simple graphs or charts.
- **Social Interaction:** The group discussion about the voting results encourages social interaction and communication. Children share their opinions and learn about others' preferences, fostering a sense of community and collaboration.
- **Recognition and Comparison:** Children will learn to recognize different types of apples and compare their features. This helps them develop observational and analytical skills as they evaluate and choose their favorite.
- **Decision-Making:** By choosing their favorite type of apple and participating in the voting process, children practice decision-making and express their preferences in a structured manner.



Apple Still Life Paintings

MATERIALS

- Fresh apples (various types for observation)
- Watercolor paints
- Watercolor paper or thick art paper
- Paintbrushes (various sizes)
- Water cups for rinsing brushes
- Paper towels or sponges for blotting
- Pencils for sketching (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- Set up a painting station with watercolor paints, brushes, water cups, and paper. Make sure each child has access to a piece of watercolor paper and all necessary materials.
- Encourage children to explore and experiment with the materials however they choose! We do not expect young children to automatically replicate apples, however, the provocation may inspire their work. Ultimately, we want children to express themselves, their thoughts, feelings, and observations however they choose!

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Observation:** By closely observing the apples, children will enhance their observational skills, learning to notice and replicate details such as shapes, colors, and textures.
- **Color Mixing:** Children will learn about color mixing and how to create different shades and hues by combining colors. This helps them understand color theory and develop their ability to mix paints effectively.
- **Drawing and Proportion:** Sketching the apples helps children practice drawing and understanding proportions. They will work on capturing the basic shapes and dimensions of the apples on paper.
- **Creativity and Expression:** Painting allows children to express their creativity and individuality. They can experiment with different styles and techniques to create a unique representation of the apples.
- **Fine Motor Development:** Children will improve their fine motor skills through activities like sketching and painting. Handling brushes and mixing colors enhances their hand strength, dexterity, and coordination.



Leaf Symmetry Sketching

MATERIALS

- One sheet of white construction paper
- Clear, scotch tape
- Scissors
- Collection of various leaves
- Coloring utensils: Crayons, colored pencils, or markers

DIRECTIONS

- Invite your children to both collect and select leaves to add to their white sheet of paper.
- Before taping the leaves down to the paper, cut one half of each leaf off (so your children can draw the missing half).
- Tape down the leaves - invite your children to do as much of the work as possible, in which they can then create and color the "missing pieces."
- Optional extension: Help your children research the names of the different leaves they've selected for the paper.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- By examining the original half of the leaf and replicating it on the other side, children will strengthen their **observational skills, attention to detail, and symmetry recognition.**
- This activity will introduce children to the concept of symmetry in a hands-on way. They will **learn about balance and reflection, enhancing their spatial awareness.**
- While replicating the leaf's pattern, children can also **express their creativity** by choosing colors and experimenting with different artistic ideas, **fostering their imagination.**
- Children will **refine their fine motor skills** as they use crayons or colored pencils to color within the lines, enhancing their hand-eye coordination and grip strength.
- Engaging in conversations about the colors, shapes, and patterns on the leaves **can expand children's vocabulary and descriptive abilities.**



Leaf Man 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 or around their "Leaf Man,"
- Encourage your child to talk about their Leaf Man collage. Ask questions about their design choices and the story behind their Leaf Man character.
- Once dry, display the Leaf Man 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.



Can You Make a Pattern?

MATERIALS

- Large assortment of natural materials, e.g. leaves, sticks, acorns, pinecones, rocks, pebbles, seashells, etc.
- Optional: Basket or bag to collect and store natural materials.

DIRECTIONS

- Begin by taking a nature walk with the children in an outdoor setting such as a park, garden, or forest. Encourage them to collect a variety of natural materials, such as leaves, twigs, pebbles, pinecones, and other items they find interesting.
- Discuss Patterns: Engage the children in a conversation about patterns. Show them examples of simple patterns, such as alternating colors or shapes, and explain what a pattern is – a sequence that repeats in a predictable way.
- Let the children explore and experiment with different combinations of natural materials to form patterns.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Children will **develop the ability to recognize and create simple patterns** using natural materials, **enhancing their mathematical and cognitive skills**.
- The process of arranging natural materials to create patterns **involves critical thinking and problem-solving** as children make decisions about the sequence and order of items.
- The activity **strengthens the connection between children and the natural world**, emphasizing the beauty and patterns found in nature.
- While collecting natural materials during the nature walk, children **engage their gross motor skills** by walking, bending, reaching, and carrying materials. **This contributes to their physical development.**



Nature Number Hunt

MATERIALS

- Natural materials like leaves, acorns, twigs, pinecones, or other autumn-related items for the scavenger hunt.
- Images of different numbers for your child's reference (drawn, card, etc.).
 - Based upon your children's stage of development and interest, you can gauge how many numbers you "work on" on a given day. You can start with numbers 1-3, and assess from there. You can start with larger numbers as well (e.g. numbers 5-8).
- Bag to collect materials
- Paper or cards with numbers on it

DIRECTIONS

- Find a suitable outdoor location, such as a nearby park or your backyard, with plenty of natural materials like fallen leaves, acorns, twigs, or pinecones for children to collect.
- Start with a number (e.g. the number 5) - you can write it or have your children write it if they know how.
- "How can we make the number 5?"
 - Invite children to use their materials to recreate the number five. They may form the number or place the amount of objects down that correspond to the number - or both!
- Invite children to choose another number and repeat the scavenger hunt, or explore different areas of the outdoor space to discover more natural treasures.
- You can also revisit this activity indoors by placing natural materials around the room for children to find and later create their numbers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Mathematical Conceptualization:** Children will develop a foundational understanding of numbers and quantity, as they match a numerical value (the chosen number) to a physical quantity (the collected materials).
- **Counting Skills and 1:1 Correspondence:** Children will practice counting and identifying numbers as they select a target number and verify if they have collected the correct quantity of natural materials.
- **Critical Thinking:** They will engage in critical thinking as they strategize how to find and collect the required number of items based on their chosen number.
- **Nature Appreciation:** By exploring their outdoor environment and collecting natural materials, children will gain a deeper appreciation for nature and the changing seasons, specifically autumn.



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 them to look at the pumpkin, touch its surface, and describe what they see. You may also provide tools such as magnifying glasses, scales, and rulers
- You can provide washable 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 children 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.
- Welcome children 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 children to engage their sense of touch, sight, and smell as they observe and handle the pumpkin.
- Encouraging children 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 children 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, children **practice fine motor skills like coordination, control, and dexterity.**



Pumpkin Seeds - Sorting & Counting

MATERIALS

- Fresh pumpkins (one or more, depending on the number of children)
- Plastic spoons or small scoops
- Small bowls or containers for collecting seeds
- Large bowls or trays for sorting seeds
- Paper towels or napkins for drying seeds
- Magnifying glasses (optional)
- Counting mats or charts (optional)
- Markers or pens
- Small cups for counting seeds

DIRECTIONS

- Set up a workstation with the pumpkins, plastic spoons, bowls for collecting seeds, and large trays or bowls for sorting. Provide each child with their own set of materials.
- Provide children with seeds and counting mats or charts if using. Invite them to count the seeds or match the number of seeds to the corresponding number. Encourage children to practice counting and compare their results.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Fine Motor Skills:** Extracting and sorting seeds helps children develop their fine motor skills by practicing hand-eye coordination, grip strength, and dexterity.
- **Observation Skills:** Sorting seeds using magnifying glasses encourages children to observe and describe the characteristics of each seed, such as size, shape, and texture.
- **Counting and Math Skills:** Counting seeds and recording the results help children practice basic math skills, including counting, number recognition, and understanding quantities. They also learn to compare and contrast different groups of seeds.
- **Sorting and Classification:** Sorting seeds based on specific criteria helps children develop classification skills and understand the concept of grouping based on similarities and differences.
- **Language Development:** Describing the process of extracting, sorting, and counting seeds helps children expand their vocabulary and language skills. They learn to articulate their observations and findings clearly.



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.
 - You may add a cup of water and a sponge so your child can “keep their colors clean” as they go. When they want a new color, have them dip their brush into the water and dry it on the sponge before selecting a new color.
- Have children wear child-sized aprons or old t-shirts to protect their clothing from paint.
- Let children use their creativity to paint their pumpkins as they like.
- Set the painted pumpkin aside to dry. Once dried, invite children to talk about their work before choosing a place to showcase it.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Fine Motor Skills Development:** Painting requires children to use small, controlled movements of their hands and fingers, which can help improve their fine motor skills. Holding a paintbrush and applying paint to the pumpkin surface helps with hand-eye coordination and dexterity.
- **Observational Skills:** While painting, children can observe the texture, shape, and features of the pumpkin. This helps enhance their observational skills, which are essential for scientific and artistic activities.
- **Creative Problem-Solving:** When faced with artistic challenges, such as mixing colors or correcting mistakes, children can develop creative problem-solving skills and adapt their approach.



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.



MADE FOR CHILDREN. DESIGNED FOR YOU.

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