

Spring

It's raining cats and dogs:

Have children discuss what it means when someone says "It's raining cats and dogs". If the budget allows, buy a solid colored umbrella for each child at the Dollar store. (Or ask parents if they have an old umbrella children can use.) Using permanent markers or waterproof paints, invite children to decorate their umbrellas. The next time it rains, go outside and use these one-of-a-kind umbrellas. If you live in a dry climate, ask an adult to spray children with a hose as they use their umbrellas. S&S also sells Color-Me™ Umbrellas (item number FA3358).

Springtime fishing:

Teach children about magnets by adding 5-6 "fish" (actually large paper clips!) to a jar filled with water. Give children a strong magnet and let them "catch" fish by holding the magnet outside the jar and moving the paperclip fish.

Thunder and lightening:

Spring is a time for thunder and lightening, which can scare children. Help them make their own "thunder" noise. Give each child a drum, empty box or plastic tub. When you announce "I think I hear thunder!", children bang on their item to make thunder noises. After they are comfortable with the loud sound, demonstrate how you'll make "lightening" by flicking the lights on and off.

What makes it grow?

Set out 5-6 clear plastic cups filled with dirt. Have children help you plant a fast growing seed like beans, radishes or even grass seeds. Most children know plants need water and light to grow. Set up an experiment by keeping one container in a dark closet. What other liquid might help a plant grow? Use milk, soft drinks or even coffee to water other containers with seeds. Label each one. Make a chart as children predicate which seed grows fastest. After a few weeks, compare the results of a seed grown in sunlight with water and a seed left in a closet and moistened with coffee.

Rainbow necklaces:

Set out bowls of Fruit Loop type cereal. Give each child a piece of yarn about 24" long. Ahead of time, make a "needle" by tightly wrapping a small piece of tape around one end of the yarn. This makes it easier for children to string their cereal. On the other end of the yarn, tie a cereal piece with a knot. This prevents the children from stringing cereal right off the end of the yarn! Encourage children to make rainbow necklaces by stringing 6-8 pieces of pink cereal, 6-8 pieces of yellow cereal etc. Tie the ends and wear your rainbow necklace until snack time.

Spring weather:

Children enjoy learning new words. Explain the term "unpredictable weather". Play a game where you are announcing various types of spring weather. Children should act out each situation. For example, if you say, "Windy weather", they move around the room as if the wind is blowing. When you announce "Rainstorm", they pretend to put up umbrellas or get out of the rain.

Recycled Easter eggs:

Most stores sell plastic Easter eggs at greatly reduced prices after Easter. Purchase several packages and use as learning tools:

- Use a permanent marker to write a number inside the eggs. Hide the eggs. Take turns picking children to find two eggs and adding the numbers together.
- Put slips of paper inside each egg with a phrase as a "story starter". Children select an egg and then write a story based on their phrase such as "a blue rabbit eating a jellybean" or "raindrops as big as cars".
- Sort the eggs according to color.
- Use permanent markers and let children decorate eggs.

Springtime Song:

Children can sing and act out this song: (Tune of Do you Know The Muffin Man?)

Do you see the baby chicks, the baby chicks, baby chicks?

Do you see the baby chicks? They waddle around like this. (Children waddle like little chickens.)

Do you see the buzzing bee, the buzzing bee, the buzzing bee?

Do you see the buzzing bee? They fly around like this. (Children fly like bees)

Do you see the flowers grow, the flowers grow, the flowers grow?

Do you see the flowers grow? They slowly grow like this. (Children pretend to be flowers)

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GP-1922

Hands-On Learning

Project Ideas • Cross Curricular Links • Activity Sheets

Spin 'N Learn™ Season Cycle

PACKAGE OF 12



Please read all directions before starting.

Your package contains:

- Dials
- Markers
- Tablecloth

Additional Materials You will Need:

- Flashlight (optional)

Instructions: As you're learning about the four different seasons, color both the outside dial and film with the markers included. To use the dial, simply move the inner circle by holding onto the tab and moving it. If you choose, in a dark room you could shine a flashlight (S&S item number SL8954) through the clear circle and see the image projected onto the wall. Try holding the flashlight at varying distances away from the wall. The dial can also sit on a table by extending the legs on the back.

Teaching Activities Inside

Activity Guide

General overview of seasons:

4 corners = 4 Seasons:

Play this game as a way to evaluate how much your group knows about the seasons.

In each corner of a room, post the words summer, winter, spring and fall along with a picture. "Summer" might have a yellow sun, "winter" a snowman, etc. Have children stand in the middle of the room. Hold up an item of clothing and ask "What season would I wear these mittens?" The children walk over to the appropriate corner. Reinforce the concept by saying, "That's right. We wear our mittens in the winter when it's cold." Hold up another item and ask "If I wanted to wear my swimsuit at the beach, what season would it be?" Children walk over to the "summer" sign. Again, reinforce the concept by saying "We wear our swimsuits if we are swimming outside in the summer." For variety, let the children skip, hop or crawl to the correct corner.

Magazine Picture Match:

Ahead of time, cut out magazine pictures depicting seasonal items such as sun screen, snow suits, trees with blossoms, people having a picnic, etc. As the children sit with you, give them each 3-4 of the cut-out pictures. Show the group a large poster board divided into four equal sections. Each section is labeled with a particular season and corresponding picture. Ask, "Who has a picture of something hot I would drink after playing in the snow?" A child with a picture of hot chocolate comes up and with a glue stick, attaches her picture to the section marked "winter". Comment on how nice it is to drink hot chocolate on a snowy winter day. Repeat the process by asking questions such as "What should I put on my face if I'm going to play outside in the sun all day?" What would I wear on my feet if it was raining and there were mud puddles? Be sure to allow for seasonal variations. It can be a rainy day in all four seasons if you live in Seattle!

What should I pack?

Collect an assortment of seasonal items such as a heavy jacket, raincoat, swimsuit, flip flops, sunglasses, umbrella, etc. As the children sit with you, bring out a suitcase and say “Let's pretend I'm going on a trip tomorrow. It’s summer time and I'm going to the beach. Will you help me pack?" Hold up each item and ask, "Do I need my ski jacket in the summer?" "Will I need flip flops for my summer trip?" When the children tell you that you need a certain item, put it in your suitcase. Repeat on another day by pretending you are going on a trip in another season.

All-Season Tree:

Give each child a large piece of construction paper. Use a marker or crayon to divide the paper into four equal sections. Label each section, summer, winter, spring and fall. Draw the basic outline of a tree in each section with a trunk and bare branches. While studying each season, children can find the appropriate tree and add details such as blossoms for spring or colorful leaves for fall.

Summer Fun:

Most children understand that summer is the time for popsicles, no school and outdoor fun. Try some of these activities to help children learn even more about summer.

Creating with corn on the cob:

Summer is a traditional time for corn on the cob. Let children shuck their own corn. After the corn is boiled and eaten, use the cobs for a craft project. Pour paint onto paper plates. Let children roll their empty cobs in the paint and then onto a piece of construction paper for an abstract design. Yes, they'll get paint on their hands, but that's why we have soap and water!

Beachy-Snacks

Many people enjoy going to the beach in the summer. Plan a

beach related snack by serving sand-wiches. Another fun treat is to sprinkle grated parmesan cheese on a plate to represent sand. Top with cooked shell pasta. Add a red cherry tomato to look like a beach ball.

Wet Math:

Set up 4-5 several plastic bowls filled with water. Label each bowl 1-5. Have children take turns tossing two ping pong balls in the water and adding their result. For example, a ball landing in bowl # 4 and another ball landing in bowl # 2 equals 6.

Dressing for summer:

If your group is meeting in the winter, plan a "Dress for Summer" day. Invite children to wear shorts, sun dresses and sandals. Compare and contrast what they normally wear in the winter with summer-type clothes.

Summertime Duck Duck Goose:

Go outside and have children sit in a circle as if they were playing a traditional game of Duck Duck Goose. Here's the Summertime twist: The person who is "IT", walks around the outer circle with a small paper cup half filled with water. "It" taps each person lightly on the head, saying, "Dry...Dry...Dry...WET! At that point she pours the water on the sitting child and the race is on!

Dancing Fish:

If you can’t take the group on an actual summertime fishing trip, then make some fish dance. Fill a jar with water. Add a few large paperclips to represent fish. Using a strong magnet, let children move the magnet along the outside of the glass, causing the fish to "dance".

Shoe Math:

Many times we go barefoot in the summer. Have the group take off their shoes. Put the shoes in a pile. Provide a variety of math related activities such as:

- Sort the shoes into sandals and tennis shoes.
- Count the shoes. How many pairs would that be?
- How many shoes have shoelaces?
- Sort the shoes from biggest to smallest. Which is the most popular color or style?

Fall Fun:

Peanut hunt:

If there are no peanut allergies in your group, have fun with a peanut hunt. Simply buy several bags of peanuts in their shells. Hide the peanuts outside among trees, bushes and playground equipment. (Indoor peanut hunts are ok also!) Children pretend they are squirrels and try and find the peanuts. When most of the peanuts are found, select several children to hide the nuts again. Then simply have the rest of the "squirrels" once again find the peanuts. Since children enjoy both hiding and finding objects, this activity can go on for a long time!

After the peanut hunt:

Once children have collected all the peanuts try these activities:

- Count the peanuts.
- Put the peanuts in piles of 2 or 5 or 25.
- Sort the peanuts among those that are cracked and those that are whole.
- Make up stories about the squirrels that like to eat nuts.
- Let older children grab a handful of peanuts. Ask them to write a story about their peanuts.
- Find the largest and smallest peanuts.
- Eat the peanuts!

Flying geese:

In the fall, as geese fly south, they fly in a "V" shape. Divide children into groups of 8-10. Place them in a "V" shape and see if they can move around the room while still in that same formation.

Sticky snack:

Children love playing with "Homemade Fall Play-Dough". Mix together 1 cup honey, 1 cup peanut butter and 1 cup dry evaporated milk. Make sure children wash their hands well. Give each child some play-dough on a paper plate. Let them form the dough into leaf shapes. Afterwards, eat your creation. (Make sure children don't have peanut allergies)

Squirrel Tail Painting:

Show children a picture of a squirrel with a bushy tail. Set up an easel with large pieces of paper. Have children use an inexpensive feather duster (available at Dollar Stores) to paint with their pretend squirrel tails.

Nature walk:

Wrap a wide piece of masking or Duct tape around each child's ankle, sticky side out. Take a walk through a grassy area. When you get back, remove the tape and look at the items stuck to the tape. Make a chart listing of all the twigs, grass blades and small pinecones attached to the tape.

Handprint leaves:

Draw the trunk and branches of a tree on a large piece of butcher paper. Pour yellow, orange and red washable paint in several paper plates. Help children press a hand into the paint, covering their palm and fingers. Each child presses their hand on a tree branch, creating their own handprint leaf. Make sure to have a sink close by for hand washing!

Colorful Leaves:

Read the book "Why Do Leaves Change Color?" by Betsy Maestro. Take a walk and see if you can find different colored leaves. Have each child bring back a leaf. Glue the leaf on a piece of plain paper. Using markers or crayons, draw a picture, incorporating the leaf. Children might add wheels to their leaf and turn it into a unique car. Maybe the leaf is a hat for a fairy princess. Have older children write a story to describe their leafy picture.

Pumpkin Party:

Plan a variety of pumpkin related activities to celebrate fall.

- Ask children to bring in a pumpkin. Line up pumpkins across the room according to size.
- Guess which pumpkin is the heaviest and lightest. Get a scale and chart the weight.
- Do pumpkins float? Get a tub of water and see what happens when you drop in a pumpkin.
- Younger children find it easier to decorate a pumpkin with permanent markers. Older children can help carve the pumpkin with a safety tool and clean out the insides. Make mini-terrariums by adding some potting soil to a re-sealable bag. Add 2-3 pumpkin seeds and enough water to keep the dirt moist. Seal the bag and wait. At first you'll be able to see the moisture inside the bag. As soon as the seeds start to sprout, have children take them home to plant in a larger area.

Winter Fun:

Trees Without Leaves:

Go outside and find a deciduous tree with all the leaves gone. Have children examine the tree and talk about the various parts. How do trees look different in the summer? Back inside, draw a large tree on butcher paper. Label the trunk, bark, branches, roots, etc. As the season changes to spring, children can add paper leaves to the drawing.

Snow Globe Stories:

Ask children to bring in plastic snow globes. In a group circle, discuss the "scene" inside each globe. Younger children can make up stories about who lives in the tiny house or what the snowman is thinking as the snow falls on him inside the globe. Older children can select a snow globe and write a story about that winter scene.

Indoor Skating Rink:

Go to a gym or floor with a smooth surface. Have children "skate" around the room in their socks. Add some music and have children skate according to the beat of the music. Talk about the smooth floor. To discuss the concept of friction, ask children to try and "skate" on a carpeted floor. What's the difference between the two floors?

Snowman Snack:

For a fun snack, use an ice cream scoop in cottage cheese to make a round snowman's head. Let children use raisins, grapes, orange wedges and other garnishes to create a face for their snowman.

Mitten Matching:

Ask children to bring in an assortment of mittens. With the group, have a discussion on why we wear mittens. Then plan a variety of activities connected with mittens. This can include:

- Toss the mittens in a pile and select 2-3 children at a time to quickly match the mittens.
- Sort the mittens according to size.
- Make a graph depicting the various colors of mittens.
- Create math problems by asking children questions such as, "If I have 3 red mittens and 2 blue mittens, how many mittens do I have?"
- Have children wear mittens and try to do ordinary tasks such as buttoning a sweater or pulling a crayon out of a box. This can lead to a discussion of what it is like for people with fine motor disabilities to do ordinary activities.

A Glove of Many Textures

Have children put on wool or cotton gloves or mittens. Discuss the soft feeling of the cloth. Let children put their hands in a bowl of water with ice cubes. Can they feel the cold? What happens when the cold water melts through their gloves? After each child has wet gloves, wring out the excess water and put the gloves in a freezer. In a few hours, bring out the gloves and talk about the shape and feel of the frozen gloves. Can they get their hand inside a frozen glove? Spread the gloves on a towel and leave them in a warm place. How long does it take the gloves to dry? Begin a discussion of evaporation as the children feel the dry gloves.

Writing in the snow:

Give children a dark colored paper plate. Sprinkle a few tablespoons of "snow" (actually salt) on the plate. Encourage children to practice writing their name in the snow. You can also reinforce math by giving a math problem such as "8 minus 6" and having children write their answer in the snow.

Groundhog Day shadows:

We all know if the Groundhog sees his shadow, we'll have 6 more weeks of winter. If you have sunshine, have children stand by a sidewalk and trace their shadow with chalk. A few hours later, have them stand in the same place and see if the length of their shadow has changed.

Snowflake song: (To the tune of Fere Jaques)

It is snowing

It is snowing

All around

On the ground

See the snowflakes falling

See the snowflakes falling

We're so cold!

We're so cold!

Indoor Snow:

See if someone has a snow cone machine. Use the machine to get shaved ice and put in a tub. Let children play in the "snow" with plastic toys and measuring cups.