



December 2013 Keeping the Learning Going and Just for FUN

Alternatives
For Children



Gingerbread Activities for the Whole Family

- Read the story of the Gingerbread man here:
<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/stories/GingerbreadMan.aspx>
- For some great gross motor skills activities, reenact the story of the Gingerbread Man. Who will be the Gingerbread Man, the Farmer, the pig, the fox?
- Practice jumping out of the oven, running through the forest, swimming across the river. You can set up a mini obstacle course with household items for the Gingerbread Man to run around or jump over.
- Try this movement activity, it is similar to going on a bear hunt. You lead your child through acting out the different places and actions you must go through to try and catch the gingerbread man.

Can You Catch the Gingerbread Man?

There was once a little gingerbread man.
He would always say, "catch me if you can!"
Where he was running to know one every knew,
But they tried to catch him and you can too!
First he jumped down on the floor (everyone jumps in place)
Then he went right out the door (open a door and walk through)
On a bumpy path that led to town (walk like it is really bumpy)
Where there were people all around (look around the room)
Then he ran down a curvy trail (walk around in circles)
To the river and the Foxes tail (jump on the foxes tail)
Now don't let that gingerbread boy get away
(put your hands out like you are trying to catch him)
Grab him quick before the Fox has his way
(make a grabbing action with your hands)
Oh he smells so good and yummy (rub your tummy)
I'd like to have him in my tummy!
(Pretend to eat him up! Then brush the crumbs off your hands.)

Make a Gingerbread Graham Cracker House

Need: Graham crackers, cardboard milk carton, frosting,
Decorations: gumdrops, raisins, chocolate chips, LifeSavers, cereal, etc. Use frosting to cement graham crackers to the sides of a cardboard milk carton. Children can do the spreading with a plastic knife. Children can then place the graham crackers on the frosting cement. Use frosting as "glue" to decorate with yummy decorations.

Help your Child's Imagination Take FLIGHT!

READ A BOOK!

Visit your local Library to find these
and other Gingerbread Man books



Holiday Gift Giving Ideas

Toys and play in general are important when it comes to growing up and learning about the world around us. Children use toys and play to learn cause and effect, explore relationships, practice skills they have learned, discover their identity, and help their mind and bodies grow. Play is nature's way of dealing with stress for children as well as adults. As adults, we can help by investing in toys that give the greatest scope to the child's imagination.

Sometimes simple ideas can be wrapped up as gifts. We have gathered some information about open-ended vs close-ended toys. Open-ended toys are the ones that can be used in many different ways, and that require imagination. Developing imagination is not only a childhood milestone, but it is a lifelong means of knowing, coping, and problem solving. Open-ended toys keep the focus on what the **child** can do, instead of what the **toy** can do. Best of all, open-ended toys are more likely to hold a child's attention. Alternatively, closed-ended toys are ones that can only be used in one way. They have only one purpose, and only one way of playing. Toys like these quickly become predictable, and often boring.

Find out more about Open-Ended vs Close-Ended Toys

<http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/child-development/why-toy>

Thank you Christina McVeigh & Joy Heid

- **Mr. Potato Head:** Great toy for identifying and labeling body parts and senses
- **Farm:** Great toy for identifying and labeling farm animals, animal sounds, and actions
- **Doll house:** Great toy for identifying and labeling house items, item function, and actions
- **Toy foods/kitchen:** Use for identifying and labeling items, use to categorize items, pretend play (cooking/eating)
- **Blocks:** The possibilities are limited only by the child's imagination
- **Musical Instruments:** If real ones are not an option, there are toy drum sets, xylophones, kazoos. Even a cardboard tube can be used.

Thank You Trisha Bernhardt
Speech/Language Pathologist
For these Great Gift Ideas!

Sing Along with Miss Suzanne

<http://www.alternatives4children.org/>

Click on the NEWS & EVENTS tab and go to Video Gallery

Holiday Shopping with your Children

Tips to make it easier for both you and your child

One aspect of the holiday season that many families find challenging is taking children along during shopping trips. Braving the crowds and the cold is not only frustrating for adults, but is often very difficult for children, sometimes resulting in a dreaded "melt down." By planning ahead and arming yourself with some tips and tricks you can sometimes prevent a meltdown.

Plan ahead:

- Before heading out, consider whether this trip is one suitable to bring a child, or whether it would be better to get a sitter for a few hours.
- Check to see if your child appears too tired or hungry to handle a shopping trip. If you sense that a meltdown is imminent, it probably is. Postpone the shopping excursion if necessary.
- Explain your expectations to your child before you enter the store. You can discuss them while in the car. Make a song out of it - something like: "In the store, we WALK on the floor" or "We use a quiet voice please while we pick up some peas."
- Agree on rewards for good behavior. Keep it simple, like a favorite snack or reading a favorite book when you get home.

While at the store:

- Make a game out of shopping. Play "I Spy." Who can see the bananas first? Who can see someone with brown hair? Who can see someone wearing a hat?
- Give your child some choices. Red apples or yellow apples? Striped or spotted socks?
- It is always important to praise your child when they have behaved appropriately, such as saying "You are being so helpful." Even a hug can be reassuring and say more than words at times.

If all else fails:

Remember: Kids will be kids. Kids are not perfect, and do not have an ulterior motive to make the holidays difficult. We are not perfect either, but we are the adults. Self control and frustration tolerance are things that develop with age.

- Ignore inappropriate behavior unless it becomes dangerous or destructive. This does not mean ignoring the child, but ignoring the fact that it is the 20th rendition of "Wheels on the Bus." This might be a time to pick your battles.
- Try reminding your child of what you WANT them to do, instead of pointing out what you DON'T want them to do. For example: "Keep your hands down" instead of "Stop touching everything."
- You can remove a child who is out of control, such as taking them to the bathroom or out of the store. Tell them in a calm, firm tone that the behavior is unacceptable, and when they are calm they can try again. Remind them of the rewards. Rewarding good behavior is more effective in the long run than consequences for inappropriate behavior.
- If all else fails, and the child is unable to calm down, it is ok to go home and return alone once you have found a sitter.

Thank you

Alternatives For Children School Psychologist Christina McVeigh
and Alternatives For Children Social Worker Joy Heid

We Want to HEAR From YOU!

We hope you are enjoying these FUN monthly Home Activities! Please let us know if there is anything on different topics you would like to see here.



We would also like to **HEAR** from **YOU** about any parent/family workshops that you might be interested in.

Here are some ideas WE have.

What ideas do YOU have?

- Toilet Training Tips.
- ABCs of Behavior - Social/Emotional Developmental Stages.
- Picky Eaters - The Sequential Oral Sensory Approach to feeding.
- Literacy For All - Helping children with special needs learn how to read and communicate.
- Set Limits and Save Your Sanity - Making choices and dealing with consequences.
- Turning NO into YES - Creative strategies for re-direction and limit setting that enable you to maintain a positive relationship.
- Learning Through Play - what does that mean and how can we make it work.
- The "Law" and students with disabilities and special needs. Advocating for your child with special needs.
- Supplemental Special Needs Trust & Special Needs Planning.
- All in the Family - Resources to help support understanding in the siblings of a child with special needs.

QUESTIONS?COMMENTS?SUGGESTIONS?

Email therese.blanton@alternativesforchildren.org

Great Resources from our Website

PT - OT - Speech - Vision Services

Glossary pages of commonly used terms

<http://www.alternatives4children.org/glossary.html>

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