Gingerbread Man Science Experiment

At the end of the story, the gingerbread man jumps on the fox’s back to cross the river. Challenge your child to hypothesize, or guess, what might have happened to the baked treat if he had tried to swim across the river by himself. Write down his or her answer on a sheet of paper. Then, work with your child to test the hypothesis with this simple experiment.

1. Buy or make a gingerbread man cookie.
2. Have your child draw a picture of the cookie.
3. Place the cookie in a bowl of water.
4. After 5 minutes have elapsed, have your child draw a picture of the cookie. Discuss whether the cookie’s appearance has changed and how.
5. Repeat step number 4 at 5-minute intervals until the cookie has crumbled into the water.
6. Given the results of the experiment and the danger of riding with the fox, ask your child to suggest other ways the gingerbread man could have escaped.

Fairy tales have been told by cultures around the world for hundreds of years. With simple plots, strong characters, rich language, and clear lessons, they make fun parent–child read-aloud stories. Plus, they can help develop imagination and creativity. Albert Einstein thought they promoted intellectual development too. He famously said, “If you want your children to be intelligent, read them fairy tales. If you want your children to be more intelligent, read them more fairy tales.”

Teaching Your Child Using Fairy Tales

Fairy tales are a wonderful way to engage young children in reading and learning. This tip sheet is designed to provide activities to supplement your child’s learning experience with the fairy tales in this set. Young children thrive in an environment where learning and play go hand in hand. The following hands-on activities will spark your child’s enthusiasm for learning and get them excited about reading.

Gingerbread Man Treats

Reinforce fine-motor skills in this delicious way. Bake gingerbread men from a mix or from scratch. Use canned or homemade icing to decorate the cookies, adding raisins or other small food items for eyes, buttons, etc.

Cookie Cutter Printing

Pour a thin layer of paint in the bottom of a shallow container, such as a clean foam meat tray. Encourage your child to dip cookie cutters into the paint and then use them to stamp their shapes on paper.

Story Sparkers

Use one or more of the following questions to spark storytelling. Write your child’s answer on a piece of paper and have him or her illustrate it.

- How would you catch the gingerbread man if he ran away from you?
- What could you do with a gingerbread man if you didn’t want to eat him?
- Where do you think the gingerbread man was going?
Thank-You Card
Discuss how the elves helped the shoemaker and his wife and how the shoemaker and his wife made the elves clothing to thank them for their kindness. Ask your child to name someone who has helped him or her and how. Provide your child with a manila folder and markers or crayons. Have your child decorate the front cover. Inside the folder, have him or her write or dictate a note to the chosen special person, thanking the person.

Shoe Shopping Collage
Provide catalogs, magazines, and newspaper flyers for your child to cut out pictures of shoes, sandals, sneakers, boots, or other footwear. Provide construction paper and glue for your child to create a collage. Discuss when and where the different types of shoes are worn. For example, sandals are usually worn in warm weather, while boots are worn in cold or rainy weather.

Shoe Art
Salvage one of your child’s outgrown shoes to create a couture decoration for his or her room. Or decorate a pair and use them as bookends! Here’s how.

1. Prepare the shoe by spray painting it in a bright or glittery color—from red or pink to silver, gold, or even black!
2. Gather decorative items such as beads, feathers, rhinestones, sequins, glitter, pom-poms, and other small, lightweight treasures.
3. Provide sticky craft glue in a small container and a popsicle stick or disposable brush to apply items on shoes.
4. Encourage your child to create his or her own couture masterpiece.
5. Let dry thoroughly and display!

Sole Rubbings
Check your family’s closets for shoes with different types of soles. Provide copier or other lightweight paper and peeled crayons. Show your child how to lay a piece of paper over the sole of a shoe and rub the side of the crayon over the paper to reproduce the pattern on the sole. Compare and contrast the different patterns the soles make and discover the different lengths and widths of the shoes.
Handprint Swan

Paint your child’s palm, fingers, and thumb of one hand with white paint. Then, with your child’s fingers held together and the thumb spread away from the rest of the fingers, have your child press his or her hand on a piece of blue construction paper. When the prints are dry, provide orange and black markers for your child to add eyes, a beak, and feet. Variation: For a mess-free version, eliminate the paint and trace your child’s hand in the same position on a piece of white construction paper instead. Then, have him or her glue it on a piece of blue construction paper and decorate.

“Me Recipe”

Talk with your child about how the duckling felt when all the other animals were teasing him. Ask your child if he or she has ever been teased and how they felt. Tell your child that one way people deal with teasing is to have confidence that they are special in various ways. Create a blank body outline of your child. Inside, have your child feature all of the unique ingredients that make him or her special by drawing pictures or symbols to represent each quality. Then, have your child add personal details to the body outline.

Duck, Duck, Swan

Play this variation of the popular playground game “Duck, Duck, Goose” with a small group of children. Have children sit in a circle. One child walks around the outside of the circle gently touching each child on the head saying, “Duck, duck…” When the child comes to someone he or she wants to chase him or her, the child touches that child’s head and says, “Swan.” The “swan” gets up and chases the other child around the circle back to his or her spot. The second child begins the game again.

Name that Baby!

Remind your child that a baby duck is called a duckling. Discuss the names of other animals and their babies—cat/kitten, dog/puppy, cow/calf, hen/chick, horse/foal, goat/kid, bear/cub, kangaroo/joey, rabbit/kit, and so on. Read simple nonfiction books about animals and their babies with your child. Talk about how the adult animals and their babies are the same and how they are different.
Hungry as a Giant
Giants have giant-sized appetites. Have your child plan, illustrate, and write or dictate a story about a meal—breakfast, lunch, or dinner—that would please a giant. Provide paper and markers. Discuss what the giant might like. For example, the giant might eat 1000 pancakes, 300 sausages, and a bathtub full of orange juice for breakfast.

Bean Mosaics
Provide heavy duty paper plates, glue, markers, and a variety of dried beans, such as lima beans, kidney beans, pinto beans, etc. Encourage your child to draw a simple shape and then fill it in with different kinds of beans to create a mosaic.

Giant Steps Measuring
Trace a large freeform footprint onto construction paper or a manila folder and cut it out. Encourage your child to find items around the house that are the same length, that are shorter than, and that are longer than the footprint.

A Beanstalk of My Own
Lima beans are easy and fun to observe growing. Provide a clear plastic cup filled about two-thirds with soil. Soak some lima beans overnight for quick sprouting. Have your child poke holes in the soil and plant 3–4 lima beans. Water the beans and keep the soil moist but not wet. Once the beans have sprouted, add a small cut-out construction paper castle and some cotton ball clouds to a straw or bamboo skewer and stick them in the soil for the beanstalks to climb. For some super science learning, encourage your child to keep a daily journal with illustrations of the progress of the beanstalks.