

Holiday & Seasonal Props

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All children get excited about upcoming holidays and special seasons of the year. You can easily enhance your preschool program by including some fun activities and props along with your gymnastics skills and progressions. Why add seasonal/holiday activities? When children know something about a topic, they are more likely to be excited and involved in what you are doing. Take advantage of this opportunity for "teachable moments."

To have success adding extra things to your gymnastics curriculum, keep these things in mind:

1. Emphasize teaching gymnastics and movement. Extra props and activities should be "in addition to" not "instead of" gymnastics.
2. The teacher should always be at an area to directly spot or supervise a gymnastics skill-progression, the additional games are to keep the children busy while waiting for another turn with the teacher. The props/games you add should have a developmental purpose-coordination, strength, balance, manual dexterity. Communicate the benefits of these extra stations to parents with handouts and lobby talk.
3. Be sensitive to religious concerns for some holidays. Talk to children about how some people celebrate different holidays. It's fun to learn what other people do. You can merge your holidays with seasons, i.e., Halloween/Harvest Fun.
4. Decorate! Don't let your preschool area look the same all the time. Add colorful posters, banners or balloons to make your area look different and inviting. Easy props to add for color and theme are vinyl shapes (pumpkins, bats, hearts, animals, etc.) to use instead of carpet squares. Make colorful beanbags for each season. Make pillowcases for each holiday/season, they have tons of uses! The visual stimulation of color and props makes even the shy child join in.

Halloween & HARVEST FUN

- Jump in Trick or Treat bags (pillowcases) around Witches Hats (orange cones).
- Step over black cats (beanie babies) on beam.
- Pick up bugs/snakes/spiders on beam, put into pumpkin bucket.
- Toss and catch ghosts (scarves). Put on your head and be a ghost. Twirl them around so they fly.
- Hang like a Halloween bat on the bar (bat swing).
- Bat orange and black balloons with hand or racket. o Tape a jack-o-lantern face on mat, cast or swing and jump backward, land on face.
- Tape a big pumpkin face on wall and throw beanbags at it.

Christmas & WINTER FUN

- String some jingle bells on elastic cord. Let each child wear one on wrist or foot while warming up. Sing "Jingle Bells."
- Use jingle bell bands as a relay. Put them in a hoop, put one on your foot, do a locomotor skill across floor to another hoop, take it off, put it in hoop and run back. The noise is GREAT!
- Buy some Holiday socks and mittens. Put up a clothesline, use clothespins to hang the socks/mittens. It's a great waiting station and manual dexterity game). Donate the socks and mittens to a shelter.
- Drape a Holiday sock over the bar. Hang on bar, lift up feet and grab the sock.

- Draw a snowman face on a pit cube. Stack up 3-4 cubes (build a snowman) in front of the bar. Glide swing and kick over the snowman.
- Hang jingle bells from bar with string. Lift legs up and kick the bell, or climb sideways across bar and jingle the bell.
- Step over, jump over, or pick up Holiday shapes on beam-candy canes, pine trees, presents, etc.
- Be a drop off center for Toys For Tots.

VALENTINES DAY

- Step over hearts on beam "Don't break my heart."
- Hang red/pink balloons from bar-swing and kick them.
- Cut Valentine hearts into two pieces each. Mix them up. Each child picks a piece and finds the one to match for their partner for some partner stretches.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

- Green Leprechaun hats to put on and walk across beam, or put on beam to step over.
- Plastic gold coins to carry across beam and put in pot of gold at end.
- Shamrock shapes to use for relays.

Easter & PETER COTTONTAIL WEEK

- Make a nest with plastic eggs.
- Put toy animals inside (or dinosaurs) to open-manual dexterity game.
- Put plastic rings with eggs inside on beam-step over birds nests.
- Hang blow up eggs from bar-swing and kick them.
- Use blow up ducks/chickens (weighted on the bottom, available at Walgreens) under the low bar. Swing and kick the duck.
- Put buckets of small eggs at the end of the beam-use a shovel to scoop up eggs, carry across "bridge" and put into empty bucket.
- Make a "Briar Patch" - Free exploration obstacle course with a donut in the middle, that's the bunnies hole in the ground. Find all the ways to get in and out of the bunnies house.
- Do a relay with eggs, run with them on a spoon, roll them with your nose. Roll them down an incline mat and roll down after.