



Check your parent packets for new info each month. And you'll get some additional information in your inbox each week after the program...stay tuned and make sure you're checking those emails!

# October 2024 Parent Packet

Welcome to Laugh and Learn Playdates! We have been offering this program for SEVEN years now!! Some of you have been with us before, and we welcome you back. For the new families, we are so happy for you to join the fun!

We are focused on providing hands-on activities, a space for creative exploration, and interactive play that will help your kiddos develop important cognitive, social, and motor skills in a fun, unstructured environment.

The kids aren't the only ones that benefit from Laugh and Learn. We have found that this program is a great support system for parents and caregivers offering valuable resources, guidance, and opportunities to connect with other families. We aim to empower you with tools and knowledge to create meaningful learning experiences at home!

If your family participates in the grab and go part of this program, we are glad you're here too! We expanded Laugh and Learn to reach a broader audience in 2020, and people seemed to really like it! We understand that not everyone can come to an in person program during the day, we will give you information, resources, and tools in a "to-go" format so you can re-create a similar play based learning environment at home!

Our in person programs are from 9a-11a, it is come and go as you please! Don't hesitate to ask questions!! Grab and Go's are first come, first serve.

*Natalie Paul*

Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences  
Grayson county

## Cooperative Extension Service

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# Packing Lunches for Happy, Energetic Kids



Lunch is a nice break from the work and play happening at school. It is also an important time for children to refuel for the rest of the day. Here are some tips for packing a delicious and nutritious lunchbox.

**Balance is key.** Children need a mix of protein, carbohydrates, and fats throughout the day. This variety fills their belly, fuels their mind and body, and helps regulate energy and emotions during the day. Even more importantly, this combination is the recipe for a tasty lunch.

**Protein Power.** Protein in the lunchbox is key for helping children feel satisfied throughout the day. Include something like a hardboiled egg, beans, roasted turkey or chicken, nut butter, yogurt, or cottage cheese.

**Colorful carbohydrates.** Fruit and vegetables are colorful ways to add energy and flavor. Whole grains are another great source of energy. These include foods like oats, brown rice, quinoa, popcorn, and whole-grain pasta, bread, and crackers. These higher fiber carbohydrate choices will provide a steady release of energy, keeping your child energized throughout the day.

**Flavorful fats.** Flavor makes food tasty to eat. Fat is one important part of flavor, and a little goes a long way. Oils, dips, and dressings are great flavor boosters for vegetables and whole grains. Nuts and seeds, cheese or yogurt, and avocado also have nutritious and delicious fat.

**Pull it together with a theme.** Now that you know the parts and pieces of a lunch, how do you put it all together? Having a go-to list of ideas can make it easy to pull together what you have in the kitchen. Tex Mex, snack platter, pizza, and breakfast are a few ways to piece together foods. For example, breakfast for lunch could include a hard-boiled egg with peppers, string cheese, grapes, and whole-grain crackers. It could also be a whole-grain waffle with nut butter or yogurt, banana, and cucumber.

**Pack at your peak.** Are mornings hectic? Pack lunches the night before. Does it work better to do everything at once? Take extra time on Sundays to pack lunches for the week. This makes it a grab-and-go in the morning. Rather than a back and forth of figuring out what to pack.

**Have children take the lead.** With some guidance about what kinds of food to include, children can pack their own lunches. Consider laying out all the ingredients and guiding them through putting it together. For older children, you can provide a menu of what is for lunch. They can find and put everything together. To give children even more independence, you can give them a checklist of healthy options. Provide structure by telling them how many choices to pick from each category. Younger children will need help, but they will enjoy being part of the process.

Once you have a delicious and nutritious lunch packed, make sure to include an ice pack. This keeps food safe until it is time to eat.

## Resources:

Academy Nutrition Information Services Team. (2021, May 1). Banishing Brown Bag Boredom. Kids eat right. <https://www.eatright.org/food/planning/away-from-home/banishing-brown-bag-boredom>

The Nutrition Source. (n.d.). Packing a Healthy Lunchbox. Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/kids-healthy-lunchbox-guide/>

**Source:** Courtney Luecking, Extension specialist for nutrition and health



# The Dinner Table Project

A program to encourage families to eat together, have fun, and grow closer through conversation.



## Apple Crumb Dessert

- Nonstick cooking spray
  - 4 medium apples for baking
  - 1/2 cup quick-cooking oatmeal (uncooked)
  - 1/4 cup light or dark brown sugar, packed
  - 2 teaspoons of cinnamon
  - 1/3 cup 100% apple juice
- 
- Move the oven rack to the center of the oven. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
  - Spray the bottom and the sides of a 9-inch square baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
  - Wash and peel the apples. Cut them into thin slices.
  - Spread the apple slices evenly over the bottom of the baking dish.
  - In a small bowl, use a fork to mix the oatmeal, brown sugar, and cinnamon.
  - Spread the oatmeal mix evenly over the apples in the baking dish.
  - Lightly pour the apple juice over the oatmeal mixture
  - Cover the dish and bake for 20-30 minutes until apples start to soften.
  - Uncover and bake for another 15-20 minutes until apples are soft.



## Questions to Ask Everyday...

- What are 3 things for which you are thankful today?
- What did you learn today?
- How did you make someone smile today?

## Conversation Starters...

- Who are people in your life that help you and how do they help you?
- What activities help you feel joy?
- Who is a fictional character you'd like to be best friends with?
- What makes you feel like dancing?

## Did You Know...

October is Youth Substance Use Prevention Month. Prevention science and decades of community-based experience and scientific research shows that prevention works!

Servings: 4 Serving Size: 1/4 of the recipe



## Fall Activity: Making bird feeders



### Materials & Tools You Need:

- Toilet paper roll
- Yarn
- Bird seed
- Peanut butter

### Instructions:

- Punch two holes in the top of the toilet paper roll.
- Tie some yarn through each hole.
- Slather peanut butter on the toilet paper roll and roll it in birdseed.
- Tie the yarn around a tree branch and watch the birds enjoy the feast.



## Developmental Relationships

Developmental relationships are the roots of thriving and resilience for young people, regardless of their background or circumstances. Through these relationships, young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them.

## Provide Support: Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.

- **Navigate** - Guide me through hard situations and systems.
- **Empower** - Build my confidence to take charge of my life.
- **Advocate** - Stand up for me when I need it.
- **Set Boundaries** - Put in place limits that keep me on track.



## DTP...On The Go!

October is a great month for families to spend quality time together. There are community events that encourage family participation such as pumpkin patches, petting zoos, pony rides, hayrides, and festivals. Family members can also bond by creating and carving their own pumpkins. When traveling to community events, families can use this time to be creative by allowing each person to tell a story.

Other family members can add to the story or create a new one. To make it more realistic, the storyteller can be dramatic when telling the story by raising, changing, or lowering their voice. They may also want to act the story out by using nonverbal body language such as facial expressions and hand and arm motions.



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[dinnertableproject.org](https://dinnertableproject.org)





## **BUDGET-FRIENDLY** *Fall Activity* **CHECKLIST**



- Go on a nature hike.
- Have a picnic.
- Go pick pumpkins.
- Carve Jack-o' lanterns.
- Visit an apple orchard.
- Make your own local fun.
- Create an outdoor obstacle course.
- Spend time around the fire pit.
- Tailgate from home.
- Make apple cobbler.
- Pop popcorn on the stove.
- Roast pumpkin seeds.
- Watch a favorite fall movie.
- Learn about money together.
- Roast marshmallows.
- Drink hot chocolate.
- Go for a Sunday drive.
- Camp out in your backyard.
- Enjoy some spooky science.
- Take up bird-watching.
- Jump into a pile of leaves.



# Activity Guide



This is a guide on how to use materials in your kit. But feel free to let your child run with their imagination and do what comes to them as they play!

## Tissue Paper Pumpkin

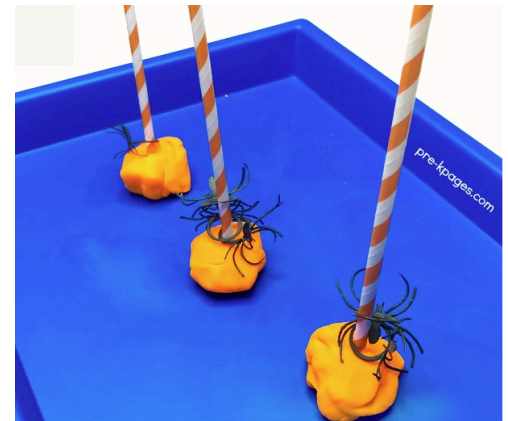


1. Cut or tear pieces of tissue paper
2. Spread thin layer of glue over pumpkin (*tape would also work!*)
3. Place small wads of tissue paper over glue/tape to create a textured pumpkin masterpiece!

## Stacking Spiders

1. Grab a blob of playdough (or anything that will hold your straw up and steady!)
2. Dump the spider rings and let your kids explore!

Create variation by adding a dice and letting them roll to see how many spiders to add. Play with color and making patterns. Let your kids take the lead!



## Paper Plate Fruit Basket



1. Color fruits/veggies and plate
2. Cut out half of center plate leaving a handle around the top (see picture)
3. Cut out fruits/veggies
4. Glue/tape fruits/veggies to paper plate basket

Happy Halloween  
2024

