

We Skoolhouse

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# Ready-Made Curriculum: Autumn Exploration



# A Practical Guide for Exploration

Each unit offers a suggested flow of experiences designed to support deep, meaningful learning through play. You'll notice intentional repetition—this is purposeful. Repeating activities builds memory, mastery, confidence, attention, and focus, forming the foundation for long-term learning.

The experiences are open-ended & process-driven, focusing on how children learn rather than what they produce. This allows for a range of learning styles & encourages exploration at each child's unique pace.

## Flexibility Matters

Each unit includes a suggested daily activity guide to support your planning—but it's not meant to be followed rigidly or completed in a set order:

- **Follow the children's lead:** If they're deeply engaged, slow down. If interest fades, it's okay to pause and return later. Some children need time to warm up to new ideas—don't move on too quickly. Repeating an invitation over several days can spark richer engagement.
- **Move at your own pace:** Stretch a week into two, repeat activities as long as needed, and allow units to grow over time.
- **Revisit, don't rush:** There's no need to introduce a new unit each month. Returning to a familiar concept—like revisiting water after exploring texture or paint—deepens understanding and strengthens memory. Revisiting isn't starting over—it's going further.

**This guide is about making space for curiosity, experimentation, and meaningful learning. Use it as a springboard—trust yourself, trust the children, and allow learning to unfold naturally.**



# Unit: Autumn Exploration

Autumn is a season full of rich sensory change, offering endless opportunities for toddlers to observe, collect, and explore. This unit builds scientific thinking (noticing seasonal changes, cause and effect, classification), creative exploration (collage, stamping, sensory play), language development (descriptive seasonal vocabulary), and motor skills (scooping, sprinkling, raking, stomping). Autumn's colors, textures, and rhythms invite curiosity and wonder—nurturing connection to the natural world while deepening comfort with change.

Domain	How It Supports Development
<b>Physical</b>	Strengthens gross motor coordination through collecting, stomping, and raking leaves; fine motor control through scooping seeds, tearing paper, and sprinkling spices.
<b>Cognitive</b>	Builds early science thinking as toddlers notice seasonal change, sort leaves by color, or experiment with cause-and-effect (e.g., what sinks or floats in autumn water trays).
<b>Language</b>	Expands seasonal vocabulary ("crunchy," "smooth," "bright," "cool") and encourages labeling, repetition, and early descriptive expression.
<b>Social-Emotional</b>	Offers calming sensory input from nature and familiar seasonal rituals. Shared exploration encourages parallel play, sharing, and early cooperation.

# Unit: Autumn Exploration

**Focus Materials:** Leaves, acorns, mini pumpkins, gourds, pinecones, cinnamon sticks, whole spices, dried orange slices, sticks, bark, stones, fabric scraps in fall tones, loose parts

**Books:** We're Going on a Leaf Hunt by Steve Metzger, Apples and Pumpkins by Anne Rockwell

**Songs:** "Autumn Leaves Are Falling Down" (tune: London Bridge) & "Five Little Pumpkins"

**Vocabulary:** Crunchy, smooth, cool, crisp, dry, wet, bumpy, round, red, orange, yellow, brown, leaf, tree, fall, pumpkin, gourd, acorns, pinecones, autumn, blow, toss, float, roll, scoop, sprinkle, mix

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Nature Basket Collecting Walk & Sorting	Leaf Toss & Dance	Leaf Stamping on Fabric or Paper	Leaf Stamping on Fabric or Paper	Autumn Collage
Week 2	Leaf Toss & Dance	Autumn Sensory Bin	Autumn Sensory Bin	Apple Scent Painting	Apple Scent Painting
Week 3	Autumn Sensory Bin	Pumpkin and Gourd Exploration	Pumpkin and Gourd Exploration	Pumpkin and Gourd Painting & Stamping	Apple Scent Painting
Week 4	Autumn Collage	Autumn Sound and Movement	Autumn Sound and Movement	Autumn Sensory Bin	Autumn Sensory Bin & Leaf Toss & Dance

# Unit: Autumn Exploration

## Suggested Activities

- **Nature Basket Collecting Walk:** Go on a slow walk with baskets to gather leaves, pinecones, acorns, bark, and seed pods. Offer bowls for sorting or simple moving for categorizing & comparing.
- **Leaf Toss & Dance:** Provide dried or fabric leaves. Play gentle music and invite toddlers to toss, wave, and swirl them to explore movement and rhythm.
- **Leaf Stamping on Fabric or Paper:** Offer paint, real or faux leaves, brushes, and paper or fabric. Toddlers can press, stamp, or paint leaves—no wrong way to explore.
- **Autumn Collage:** Set out autumn-colored fabric scraps, leaves, & tissue with glue sticks. Toddlers can tear, layer, and press pieces.
- **Autumn Sensory Bin:** Fill a bin with dried corn or sand, pinecones, leaves, cinnamon sticks, and orange slices. Add scoops, spoons, and cups for open-ended play.
- **Apple Scent Painting:** Mix red paint with cinnamon. Offer brushes, fabric scraps, or halved apples for stamping & scent-rich painting.
- **Pumpkin & Gourd Exploration:** Provide whole mini pumpkins and gourds to roll, lift, tap, and carry. Add scoops for seed exploration. Builds strength, coordination, and curiosity.
- **Pumpkin & Gourd Painting & Stamping:** Offer small pumpkins or gourds with paint and chunky brushes. Children can paint the surface or roll them in paint to stamp across paper.
- **Autumn Sound & Movement:** Fill a tray with dry leaves, pinecones, and sticks. Invite toddlers to crunch, tap, and stir while listening, swaying, or stomping to soft music.



# Unit: Autumn Exploration

## Alternatives and Extensions:

Explore these simple variations to extend play, supporting repetition, variety, and deeper sensory learning:

- **Pumpkin Rolling Races:** Offer mini pumpkins and cardboard ramps. Let toddlers roll them down and watch how they move at different speeds.
- **Cozy Autumn Nook:** Drape warm-toned fabrics over a low table or a tent to create a soft, cozy tent for resting, reading, or quiet sensory play.
- **Outdoor Texture Trail:** Arrange a barefoot path using bark, crunchy leaves, grass mats, and smooth stones for toddlers to walk or crawl across.
- **Spice Smelling Jars:** Fill small jars with cinnamon, cloves, or nutmeg. Invite toddlers to smell and compare the scents with simple words.
- **Leaf Toss Tunnel:** Fill a soft tunnel with fabric leaves for toddlers to crawl through, crunch, and toss while moving their whole body.
- **Pumpkin Seed Sensory Bin:** Rinse and dry pumpkin seeds. Offer them in a low bin with scoops, cups, and spoons for stirring, pouring, and sprinkling.
  - You can also add pumpkin seeds and "guts" into sealed plastic bags, for pushing and squeezing.
- **Fabric Leaf Weaving Wall:** Attach fabric leaf shapes or ribbons to a toddler-height frame and invite children to tug, pull, and weave them through.

