

Lesson Plan: The Great Train Adventure!

For Oliver, Mila, and Reggie (Ages 2-3)

Materials Needed

- Wooden train track pieces (a variety of straight and curved pieces)
 - Wooden train cars (engine, cargo cars, caboose)
 - Small, colorful wooden blocks or large pom-poms ("cargo")
 - Small baskets or containers (at least 2)
 - Optional: Toy animals, trees, or houses to create a landscape
 - Optional: A small bell
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Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, Oliver, Mila, and Reggie will have opportunities to:

- **Fine Motor Skills:** Practice connecting track pieces and placing trains on the track.
 - **Social-Emotional Learning:** Practice taking turns and sharing materials (like a favorite train car or a specific track piece).
 - **Cognitive Development (Early Math):** Sort "cargo" by color and count train cars.
 - **Language Development:** Use words like "fast," "slow," "stop," "go," and name colors.
 - **Imaginative Play:** Create a simple story about the train's journey and its destination.
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Lesson Activities

Part 1: The Warm-Up Song (5 minutes)

Goal: To get excited and introduce the theme.

1. Gather the children in a circle near the play area.
2. Sing a train-themed song together. A great, simple option is "The Wheels on the Train" (to the tune of "The Wheels on the Bus"):
 - *"The wheels on the train go 'round and 'round..."*
 - *"The whistle on the train goes 'Choo! Choo! Choo!'..."*
 - *"The conductor on the train says 'All aboard!'..."*
4. Encourage the children to do hand motions with you.

Part 2: The Track Builders (10 minutes)

Goal: To practice fine motor skills and cooperative play.

1. Spread all the track pieces on the floor.
 2. Say, "Wow, look at all these pieces! Let's build a big track together for our trains. Where should
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the track go?"

3. Let each child choose a piece. Guide them to connect the pieces. You can model this by saying, "My piece has a knob. Mila, your piece has a hole. Let's see if they fit. Click!"
4. Focus on the process, not the perfection of the track. If they make two separate tracks, that's great! It creates two destinations.
5. Ask simple questions to encourage thinking: "Should we use a curvy piece here or a straight one?"

Part 3: The Cargo Station (15 minutes)

Goal: To introduce sorting, counting, and imaginative storytelling.

1. Once the track is built, introduce the "cargo" (colored blocks or pom-poms). Place them in a pile and call it the "Cargo Yard."
2. Place an empty basket at the other end of the track and call it the "Color Town."
3. Say, "Oh no! Color Town needs new colors! Our job is to use the trains to deliver the cargo. Oliver, can your train take all the **red** blocks to Color Town?"
4. Help Oliver load only the red blocks onto his cargo cars. Count them as you go: "One red block, two red blocks..."
5. Encourage him to push the train along the track to the destination. Ring the bell when he arrives!
6. Repeat with Mila and the **blue** blocks, and Reggie with the **yellow** blocks. Encourage them to help each other load and unload.
7. Add story elements: "The train is going through a tunnel! Choo-choo! Oh, be careful, a toy cow is near the track! The train is going very fast now! Now it's going sloooow."

Part 4: The Cleanup Station (5 minutes)

Goal: To make cleaning up a fun part of the game and practice sorting.

1. Announce, "The train's work is all done! It's time to go back to the station for the night."
2. Designate one large bin as the "Track Station" and another as the "Train Station."
3. Turn it into a race: "Let's see who can put their train to bed first! Let's find all the trains and put them in the Train Station."
4. Next, say, "Now let's clean up the tracks!" Guide them to put all the track pieces into the Track Station bin.
5. Praise their excellent work as a team.

Differentiation and Inclusivity

- **For a child needing more support:**

- Provide hand-over-hand guidance to help connect track pieces.
- Focus on just one color or one train car to avoid overstimulation.
- Simplify the language, using single words like "Go," "Stop," and "Red."

- **For a child needing an extra challenge:**

- Ask them to create a pattern with the cargo (e.g., "red, blue, red, blue").
 - Challenge them to build a bridge or a tunnel as part of the track.
 - Encourage them to tell you a longer story about where the train is going and why.
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Assessment (Informal Observation)

During the lesson, observe and mentally note the following for each child:

1. **Engagement:** Did the child stay focused on the activity for a few minutes at a time?
2. **Fine Motor:** Did they attempt to connect track pieces? Could they grasp the small blocks?
3. **Social Skills:** Did they share a train car or track piece with a sibling, either independently or with a prompt?
4. **Cognitive Skills:** When prompted, could they pick out a specific color? Did they participate in counting?
5. **Language:** Did they use any words related to the play (e.g., "choo-choo," "go," a color name)?