

Gingerbread Adventures: A 5-Day Preschool Unit

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this 5-day unit, learners will be able to:

- Identify a gingerbread man and retell one simple part of "The Gingerbread Man" story (e.g., "He runs away!").
 - Participate in a sensory activity using spices like ginger and cinnamon.
 - Count from 1 to 3 by placing "buttons" on a gingerbread man cutout.
 - Follow simple two-step directions during a craft or game (e.g., "Get the glue, then put on a button.").
 - Demonstrate gross motor skills by running, jumping, and stopping on command during a game.
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Materials Needed:

General:

- Children's books about "The Gingerbread Man" (multiple versions are great)
- Gingerbread-themed songs (e.g., "Five Little Gingerbread Men")
- Child-safe scissors, glue sticks, crayons, markers
- Construction paper (brown, white, various colors)

Day 1:

- Large gingerbread man cutout for demonstration
- Pre-cut brown paper gingerbread man shapes (1 per child)
- Decorating supplies: googly eyes, buttons, pom-poms, yarn, rickrack

Day 2:

- For Playdough: Flour, salt, cream of tartar, water, vegetable oil, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice
- Mixing bowl, spoon, measuring cups
- Gingerbread man cookie cutters, small rolling pins, plastic mats for play

Day 3:

- Large, laminated gingerbread man mats (or paper ones) with numbers 1-5 written on them
- Counting objects: large buttons, pom-poms, or small round crackers ("buttons")
- Die with dots 1-3

Day 4:

- Blue blanket or play silk for a "river"
 - Blocks or pillows to build a "bridge"
 - Open space for running
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- Animal puppets or pictures (cow, horse, fox)

Day 5:

- Gingerbread cookie dough (store-bought or pre-made) OR plain sugar cookies/graham crackers
- Frosting, sprinkles, small candies (gumdrops, M&Ms)
- Popsicle sticks or plastic knives for spreading
- Plates, napkins

Day 1: Meet the Gingerbread Man (Literacy & Art)

Introduction (15 mins)

- **Hook:** Gather the learners and show them a closed box. "I have a secret friend in this box. He smells sweet like a cookie, and he has a famous story. Can you guess who it is?" Shake the box gently. Open it to reveal a gingerbread man cookie or toy.
- **Objectives:** "Today, we are going to meet the Gingerbread Man! We will listen to his story and then make our very own gingerbread person to take home."
- **Story Time:** Read a classic version of "The Gingerbread Man" with lots of expression. Encourage children to chant along with the repeated phrase: "Run, run, as fast as you can! You can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man!"

Body (90 mins)

- **I Do (Content - 10 mins):** Show a large, plain gingerbread man cutout. "This is our gingerbread person, but he looks a little plain. He needs a face and some clothes! Watch me. I will give him two eyes so he can see." Place two googly eyes on the cutout. "And a big smile so he looks happy." Draw a smile with a marker.
- **We Do (Guided Practice - 40 mins):** Give each child their own gingerbread man cutout. "Let's give our gingerbread people eyes together. Find two eyes in your bowl. Now let's glue them on." Guide them through adding a mouth and some "buttons." Work step-by-step.
- **You Do (Independent Practice - 40 mins):** "Now it's your turn to decorate your gingerbread person however you want! You can use pom-poms, buttons, or crayons to give them clothes. Make your person special!" Circulate and offer help, asking questions like, "What color are his buttons?" or "Does your gingerbread person have hair?"

Conclusion (15 mins)

- **Recap:** Gather everyone and have them show off their creations. "Wow! Look at all these wonderful gingerbread people! What did we use to decorate them?"
- **Reinforce:** "Everyone's gingerbread person is special and unique. Let's practice his famous words one more time!" Chant the "Run, run..." phrase together.
- **Assessment:** (Formative) Observe if children can identify their gingerbread craft and repeat the key phrase from the story with prompting.

Differentiation:

- **Simpler:** Provide cutouts with pre-drawn faces. Use larger decorating items like big pom-poms that are easier for small hands to grasp. Focus on the sensory experience of gluing and sticking.
- **More Challenge:** Encourage the child to create a pattern with the buttons (e.g., red, white, red,

white). Ask them to tell you a simple story about their gingerbread person.

Day 2: Gingerbread Senses (Sensory & Science)

Introduction (15 mins)

- **Hook:** Have small, covered containers with ginger and cinnamon inside. "Let's be smell detectives! What does this remind you of?" Let them smell the spices. "These are the special smells that make gingerbread cookies so yummy!"
- **Objectives:** "Today we are going to use our noses and our hands! We will make special gingerbread playdough that smells delicious."

Body (90 mins)

- **I Do (Content - 15 mins):** Show all the ingredients for the no-cook gingerbread playdough. "To make our dough, we need special ingredients. This is flour. It's soft. This is salt. And here are our yummy spices." Measure and add the dry ingredients to a bowl, narrating each step.
- **We Do (Guided Practice - 35 mins):** "Now, let's mix it all together. Can you help me pour in the water?" Let the children help stir the ingredients (with supervision and help). "Feel it starting to get squishy and turn into dough!" Knead the dough until it's smooth.
- **You Do (Independent Practice - 40 mins):** Give each child a ball of the warm playdough on a mat. Provide cookie cutters and rolling pins. "It's your turn to play! You can roll it flat, cut out gingerbread shapes, and make your own cookie family. How does it feel? How does it smell?"

Conclusion (15 mins)

- **Recap:** "We made our very own gingerbread playdough today! What did we use to make it smell so good?" (Spices, cinnamon, ginger). "What did you make with your dough?"
- **Clean-up:** Make cleaning up a game. "Let's put all the sleepy gingerbread cutters back in their house (the bin)."
- **Assessment:** (Formative) Observe children's engagement with the materials. Can they describe the texture or smell with simple words ("soft," "squishy," "yummy")?

Differentiation:

- **Simpler:** Focus entirely on the sensory experience of squishing and smelling the dough. Hand-over-hand assistance with the cookie cutters.
 - **More Challenge:** Ask the child to make a "big" gingerbread man and a "little" one. Have them count how many shapes they can cut out.
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Day 3: Counting Gingerbread Buttons (Math)

Introduction (15 mins)

- **Hook:** Sing a counting song like "Five Little Gingerbread Men." Use finger puppets or felt board characters to represent each one as they run away.
 - **Objectives:** "Today we are going to be bakers and help our gingerbread friends get their buttons. We will practice counting so they have the right number of yummy decorations!"
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Body (90 mins)

- **I Do (Content - 10 mins):** Show a large gingerbread man mat with the number "2" on it. "My gingerbread man needs 2 buttons. Watch me count them. One... two." Place two large pom-poms on his tummy. "See? Two buttons!"
- **We Do (Guided Practice - 40 mins):** Give each child a mat with the number "1" on it and a bowl of "buttons" (pom-poms or crackers). "Let's all find the number one. Now, let's put ONE button on our gingerbread person. Good job! Now let's try number two." Practice numbers 1-3 together.
- **You Do (Independent Practice - 40 mins):** "Now you get to play the button game! You can choose a gingerbread mat and give him the right number of buttons." For a small group, they can take turns rolling a 1-3 dot die and adding that many buttons to a shared gingerbread man.

Conclusion (15 mins)

- **Recap:** "You all did such a great job counting today! How many buttons does this gingerbread man have?" Hold up one with three buttons and count together.
- **Reinforce:** Read a counting book or sing the "Five Little Gingerbread Men" song again.
- **Assessment:** (Formative) Can the child correctly place 1, 2, or 3 items on a mat when asked? Observe one-to-one correspondence (touching each button as they count).

Differentiation:

- **Simpler:** Work only on the number 1. Focus on the concept of "one" button. Use hand-over-hand guidance to place the button.
- **More Challenge:** Introduce numbers 4 and 5. Ask them to find a mat with "3" buttons or ask "Can you give me 4 buttons?"

Day 4: Run, Run, As Fast As You Can! (Gross Motor)

Introduction (15 mins)

- **Hook:** Re-read a short version of "The Gingerbread Man," focusing on all the characters who chased him. "Who tried to catch the Gingerbread Man? That's right, a cow! And a horse! Do you think we could run that fast?"
- **Objectives:** "Today we are going to move our bodies! We will play a game where we get to be the Gingerbread Man and run, run, run!"

Body (90 mins)

- **I Do (Content - 10 mins):** "In the story, the Gingerbread Man had to cross a river. Watch me! I'm going to jump over this blue river (the blanket)." Demonstrate jumping over it. "And he had to run away from the fox. When I say 'The fox is coming!' we have to freeze and be very still."
- **We Do (Guided Practice - 40 mins):** Create a simple obstacle course. "Let's all be gingerbread people together. First, we have to tiptoe past the sleeping cow (a pillow). Then we jump over the river! Then we run to the safe spot!" Go through the course together several times.
- **You Do (Independent Practice - 40 mins):** Play "Gingerbread Man Tag." The educator is the "baker" or the "fox." The children are the gingerbread people. When the educator says "Run, run, as fast as you can!", the children run to a designated safe spot (a "house"). The educator tries to gently tag them before they get there. Reset and play again.

Conclusion (15 mins)

- **Recap & Cool Down:** Sit down for some calming stretches. "Phew, all that running is tiring! We ran away from the cow and the fox. What was your favorite part of our running game?"
- **Reinforce:** Look at the pictures in the book again, pointing to the river and the fox. Connect the game directly to the story events.
- **Assessment:** (Formative) Observe if the child can follow simple motor commands like "run," "jump," and "stop/freeze." Note their level of participation and enjoyment.

Differentiation:

- **Simpler:** Focus on one action at a time (e.g., just jumping over the "river"). The tag game can be about running together to a spot rather than being "out."
- **More Challenge:** Add more steps to the obstacle course (e.g., crawl under a "fence" (a table), balance on a "bridge" (a line of tape on the floor)).

Day 5: Let's Be Bakers! (Culminating Activity & Celebration)

Introduction (15 mins)

- **Hook:** Wear a chef's hat or apron. "Guess what we get to do today? We have learned all about the Gingerbread Man, and now... we get to be bakers and make our own!"
- **Objectives:** "Today we will decorate our very own gingerbread cookies to eat! We will be careful bakers and make a delicious treat."

Body (90 mins)

- **I Do (Content - 15 mins):** Lay out all the decorating supplies. Give each child a plain cookie on a plate. "First, we wash our hands. Now, watch me. I am going to use my spreader to put some yummy frosting on my cookie. I'm spreading it gently all over." Demonstrate putting on frosting and a few sprinkles.
- **We Do (Guided Practice - 35 mins):** "Let's put frosting on our cookies together. Here is your spreader. Let's scoop a little bit of frosting." Provide hand-over-hand help as needed. "Now we can add some buttons. How many buttons should we put on?" Connect back to the math lesson.
- **You Do (Independent Practice - 40 mins):** "Now it's your turn to make your cookie perfect. You can use any sprinkles and candies you want." Let the children decorate freely. Talk about the colors and shapes they are choosing.

Conclusion (15 mins)

- **Recap & Celebration:** Enjoy the cookies as a special snack. While eating, ask simple questions. "What happened first in the story? Did the Gingerbread Man run away?"
- **Share:** "You are all amazing bakers! Tell me one thing you liked about our gingerbread week."
- **Summative Assessment:** As the child decorates, ask them to tell you about their cookie. Can they say "This is my gingerbread man"? Can they retell one part of the story with prompting (e.g., "And what did he say when he ran?" ... "Run, run!")? Their participation and verbal recall serve as the final assessment.

Differentiation:

- **Simpler:** Use a larger cookie (like a graham cracker) which is easier to spread on. Focus on the sensory joy of decorating rather than a perfect product. Use frosting in a squeeze bag to make it easier than spreading.
- **More Challenge:** Have the child help mix colors into white frosting. Encourage them to create a face on their cookie and tell a complete sentence about it (e.g., "My gingerbread man is happy.").