Universal Lesson Plan: Merry & Bright Christmas Fun (Ages 3-4)

Materials Needed for the Week:

- Large construction paper (Red, Green, Brown)
- Pom-poms (Red, Green, White)
- Masking tape or painter's tape
- Large bowl or sensory bin
- Small bells (various sizes if possible)
- Pipe cleaners or yarn
- Counting manipulatives (small buttons, large beads, or dried beans)
- Three small containers labeled '1', '2', '3'
- Pre-cut gingerbread man/star shapes (cardstock or construction paper)
- Washable paint or large crayons/markers
- Playdough (brown or cinnamon scented, optional)
- Child-safe scissors (optional, for adult use only if needed)
- Music player for movement activities (Christmas music/instrumentals)

Lesson Structure Overview: Five Days of Festive Learning

(Each daily session is designed to last approximately 20-25 minutes, keeping 3-year-old attention spans in mind.)

DAY 1: Merry Colors and Shapes (The Christmas Tree)

Learning Objectives (I Will Be Able To...):

- Identify the colors Red and Green.
- Identify the triangle shape (the tree).
- Use pincer grasp to place small objects.

Introduction (Hook & Objectives - 3 minutes)

Hook: "Look! I see something big and green that touches the ceiling! It is a Christmas tree! What colors do we see on the tree?" (Point out red and green decorations.)

Objective: "Today, we are going to be Christmas decorators! We will practice finding the red and green colors to put on our paper tree."

Body: Content & Practice (I Do, We Do, You Do - 15 minutes)

I Do (Model): Draw or cut a large green triangle on paper (the tree). Draw large red and green circles on the tree template. "Watch me! This is red. I need to find a red pom-pom and put it right here on the red circle. Now, this is green! I will put a green pom-pom right here." (Model slow, deliberate placement.)

We Do (Guided Practice): Teacher/Parent works alongside the child. "Can you find a red pom-pom?

Great! Put the red pom-pom on one of the red circles. Let's say 'Red!' together." Prompt the child to switch to the green pom-poms. Focus on grasping the small pom-poms.

You Do (Independent Practice): Give the child a small dish of red and green pom-poms and let them finish decorating the tree template. (Adaptation: If a 3-year-old struggles with placement, let them stick the pom-poms onto clear contact paper shaped like a tree.)

Conclusion (Closure & Recap - 3 minutes)

Recap: Review the colors used. "Wow, our tree looks so beautiful! We used red and green! Red like Santa’s suit, and green like the tree!"

Movement/Sensory: Sing a simple Christmas song (e.g., "Jingle Bells" or "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" focused on colors) while walking around the room.

Formative Assessment:

- Did the learner successfully match the red pom-poms to the red spots?
- Can the learner point to the triangle shape when prompted?

DAY 2: Sweet Treat Counting (Candy Canes)

Learning Objectives (I Will Be Able To...):

- Count objects to the number 3.
- Practice one-to-one correspondence (touching one item while saying one number).
- Identify the pattern: "stripey."

Introduction (Hook & Objectives - 3 minutes)

Hook: Show a picture of a candy cane or a real one. "Look at this hook! It's red and white and stripey! We see them a lot at Christmas time! They are sweet!"

Objective: "Today we are going to be Candy Cane Counters! We will practice counting one, two, three!"

Body: Content & Practice (I Do, We Do, You Do - 15 minutes)

I Do (Model): Present three small containers labeled 1, 2, and 3 (simple drawn numbers or dots). Place counting manipulatives (e.g., small beans or buttons) on the table. "I need to count 1 bean for this box. One! Now I need to count 2 beans for this box. One, two! Now, 3! One, two, three!" (Model placing items slowly while touching them.)

We Do (Guided Practice): Start with the "1" container. "Let's put 1 button in the box labeled 1. Just one!" Repeat for "2." Use hand-over-hand assistance if the child skips a number while counting. Emphasize stopping at the target number.

You Do (Independent Practice): Encourage the child to try counting the 3 items and placing them into the corresponding box independently. Repeat the 1-2-3 sequence two or three times if they remain engaged. (Scaffolding: If 3 is too hard, focus only on counting 1 and 2 successfully.)

Conclusion (Closure & Recap - 3 minutes)

Recap: "We counted 1, 2, 3! That is great counting! We have three yummy treats!"

Movement/Sensory: Use masking tape to create a "Candy Cane Path" on the floor (curved lines). Have the child walk the path, counting their steps 1, 2, 3.

Formative Assessment:

- Did the learner successfully place 3 items into the corresponding container?
- Did the learner use one-to-one correspondence (touching and counting simultaneously) for at least the number 2?

DAY 3: Hear the Bells! (Sensory and Sounds)

Learning Objectives (I Will Be Able To...):

- Differentiate between loud and quiet sounds.
- Use fine motor skills to thread beads/bells onto a pipe cleaner (with assistance).

Introduction (Hook & Objectives - 3 minutes)

Hook: Shake a large bell very loudly. Then shake a very tiny bell quietly. "Oh, listen! What is that noise? Ding-a-ling! Is this bell loud or quiet?"

Objective: "Today, we are going to make music! We will make our own bell shakers and practice being loud and being quiet!"

Body: Content & Practice (I Do, We Do, You Do - 15 minutes)

I Do (Model): Demonstrate making a simple wrist bell shaker. Use a pipe cleaner or piece of yarn and show how to thread 2-3 large beads or small bells onto it. Show how to twist the ends to make a secure bracelet or wand.

We Do (Guided Practice): Assist the child in threading the bells onto the pipe cleaner. This requires focused fine motor work. Say: "Pinch the end. Push it through the hole. You are so strong!" (Adaptation: If threading is too hard, simply tape the bells onto a cardboard tube or stick.)

You Do (Independent Practice - Music Time): Once the shaker is made, play music. Give directional cues: "Shake your bells LOUD! Shake them FAST! Now, be a mouse! Shake them QUIET! Shake them SLOW!" Let the child explore the different sounds they can make.

Conclusion (Closure & Recap - 3 minutes)

Recap: "You made so much beautiful music! We learned that shaking fast makes a loud noise, and shaking slow makes a quiet noise!"

Movement/Sensory: Have the child walk around the room like Santa's sleigh, shaking the bells softly (quietly) as they go.

Formative Assessment:

- Did the learner attempt to thread the objects onto the pipe cleaner/string?
- Did the learner respond appropriately to the "Loud" and "Quiet" commands?

DAY 4: Gingerbread Decorators (Fine Motor and Texture)

Learning Objectives (I Will Be Able To...):

- Use small motor control to place stickers or apply small dots of paint.
- Identify and describe simple textures (e.g., smooth, bumpy).

Introduction (Hook & Objectives - 3 minutes)

Hook: Present a brown cut-out (gingerbread man or star). "Mmm, I smell gingerbread! This man needs clothes! He needs buttons and a smile!"

Objective: "Today, we are going to be artists! We will decorate our gingerbread shape using our strong little fingers!"

Body: Content & Practice (I Do, We Do, You Do - 15 minutes)

I Do (Model): Show a blank gingerbread shape. Use a cotton swab dipped in paint or a marker to draw simple dots (buttons) and a face. "Watch how I pinch this cotton swab. I am making red buttons! One, two, three!" (If using stickers, model peeling the sticker off the backing.)

We Do (Guided Practice): Provide the child with their gingerbread shape and decorating materials (paint/swabs, small stickers, or chunky markers). Guide them to focus on small details. Ask: "Where should the eyes go? Can you give him a bumpy button?" Discuss the texture of the paper (smooth) versus the paint/sticker (bumpy/sticky).

You Do (Independent Practice): Allow the child time to decorate their shape freely. Encourage storytelling ("He is happy! He is wearing a funny hat!"). (Extension: If using playdough, let them roll small balls to press onto the shape as "gumdrops.")

Conclusion (Closure & Recap - 3 minutes)

Recap: "Look at your wonderful gingerbread friend! You used your little fingers so well to make all those designs!"

Movement/Sensory: Have the child pretend to be a gingerbread man running away from the baker! "Run, run, as fast as you can!"

Formative Assessment:

- Did the learner use a pincer grasp to hold the marker or place the stickers/paint dots?
- Did the learner use their entire available time to focus on the fine motor task?

DAY 5: Flying Reindeer Fun (Gross Motor and Sequencing)

Learning Objectives (I Will Be Able To...):

- Follow and respond to simple movement commands (stop, go, jump).
- Practice gross motor skills like galloping, skipping, or jumping.

Introduction (Hook & Objectives - 3 minutes)

Hook: Put on some fast, fun Christmas music. "We are going to pretend we are Santa's reindeer, pulling the sleigh! Can you stomp your hooves?"

Objective: "Today, we are going to be great runners and flyers! We will listen to the directions so we know when to GO and when to STOP!"

Body: Content & Practice (I Do, We Do, You Do - 15 minutes)

I Do (Model): Model the specific movements. "This is how reindeer gallop! Can you put one foot in front and hop-hop-hop? This is how we STOP (freeze)." Practice two movements: Gallop/Run and STOP/FREEZE.

We Do (Guided Practice - Reindeer Run): Play the music. Instruct the child: "GO! Gallop like a reindeer! Go, go, go! (Pause music) FREEZE!" Repeat this sequence, ensuring the child can stop when the music or command stops.

You Do (Independent Practice - Adding Complexity): Introduce a third movement, such as "JUMP OVER THE CHIMNEY" (use masking tape on the floor or a towel as the chimney). Give the sequence: "Gallop! FREEZE! JUMP!" Let the child lead the gallop for a short period.

Conclusion (Closure & Recap - 3 minutes)

Recap: "Wow, those reindeer were fast! You followed all the directions. You can gallop, and you know how to freeze!"

Summative Assessment: Have the child gather their favorite creation from the week (the decorated tree, the gingerbread man, or the bell shaker) and show it off, explaining what they made. "We learned about red, green, counting, and making noise!"

Formative Assessment (Movement):

- Did the learner successfully execute the "STOP" command within 3 seconds of the prompt?
- Can the learner perform two distinct gross motor movements (e.g., jump and gallop)?

Differentiation and Adaptability

Context	Scaffolding (For Struggling Learners)	Extension (For Advanced Learners)
Homeschool/Small Group	Use hand-over-hand assistance for counting and fine motor tasks. Limit counting to 1 and 2. Use larger, highly textured materials (e.g., large blocks instead of pom-poms).	Introduce patterns (red-green-red-green). Count up to 5 or 10. Write a "letter" to Santa (scribbling counts as writing).
Classroom Setting	Assign a specific "helper" (older student or co-teacher) for the counting station. Provide pre-cut shapes and focus only on decorating (Day 4) to conserve attention energy.	Use the items to create a pattern string (Day 3). Introduce vocabulary like "tinsel," "holly," and "wreath." Create a group mural of the Christmas concepts learned.