

German Christmas Star Craft Adventure!

Introduction (10 minutes):

Frohe Weihnachten! That means Merry Christmas in German! Today, we're taking a trip to Germany (in our imagination!) to learn about how families celebrate Christmas there. Germany has many wonderful Christmas traditions. Some famous ones include:

- **Christmas Markets (Weihnachtsmärkte):** Outdoor markets selling crafts, food (like Lebkuchen - gingerbread, and Stollen - fruit bread), and warm drinks.
- **Advent Wreaths (Adventskranz):** A wreath with four candles. One candle is lit each Sunday leading up to Christmas.
- **St. Nicholas Day (Nikolaustag):** On December 6th, children leave out their shoes hoping St. Nicholas will fill them with small treats.
- **Christmas Trees (Tannenbaum):** Often decorated with real candles (carefully!), ornaments, and stars.

One beautiful type of ornament often seen in Germany is the Froebel Star (Fröbelstern). It's a intricate star made from folded paper strips. Let's learn how to make one!

Activity: Making a Froebel Star (30-40 minutes):

We'll make a simplified version or follow steps for a traditional one depending on your paper strips and patience! Precision is key here.

(Note: Detailed visual steps are best for Froebel stars. Since we can't use images, verbal instructions need to be very clear. Alternatively, search for a 'Simple Froebel Star tutorial' video online to follow along with these written steps if needed.)

1. **Prepare Strips:** Take your four paper strips. Fold each strip in half lengthwise and crease well. Unfold. Then fold each long edge into the center crease line. You should now have long, thin folded strips. Fold these in half widthwise to mark the center, then unfold.
2. **Weaving the Center:** Lay one vertical strip down, folded edge up. Place a horizontal strip over it, center over center, folded edge pointing left. Place another vertical strip over the horizontal one, folded edge down. Finally, weave the last horizontal strip over the third strip and *under* the first strip, folded edge pointing right. Gently pull the ends to form a small woven square in the center.
3. **Folding the Points (Part 1):** Take the top-right strip. Fold it down over itself, creasing diagonally. Then fold this same strip to the right, creasing diagonally again to form a point aiming right. Now, fold the entire point downwards over the center square. Tuck the end of the strip under the square layer directly beneath it. Rotate the project 90 degrees counter-clockwise and repeat this process three more times with the new top-right strip each time. Flip the project over and repeat for the four strips on this side. You should now have a square with eight points sticking out.
4. **Folding the 3D Points (Part 2 - Tricky!):** Take one of the flat points sticking out. Fold it *backwards* upon itself diagonally, so it stands up slightly. Now, take the end of that same strip and carefully weave it *under* the square section located diagonally across from its base (it might be the square next to the adjacent point). Pull it through until a 3D point forms. Rotate and repeat this carefully for the other seven points. This creates the characteristic 3D look.
5. **Trim:** Once all points are folded, trim any excess paper extending from the woven points neatly with scissors.
6. **Add Hanger:** Use a needle and thread or carefully poke a small hole to add a loop for hanging.

Wrap-up & Discussion (5 minutes):

Look at your beautiful Froebel Star! These stars are a traditional German craft, often made during the Advent season. What did you learn about German Christmas today? Which tradition sounds the most interesting? Making crafts like this helps families prepare for and celebrate Christmas together. You've now made your own piece of German Christmas tradition!