

Kids Korner

Winter Provides Learning Activities

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.)—Your home is buried under snow and the kids are getting cabin fever. Jim Van Horn, family life specialist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, offers some fun—and inexpensive—ideas.

Ages 2-3

- **Animal sounds.** Take turns guessing which animal you or your child is imitating. But don't guess immediately. Your child says, "Meow."

- "That can't be a dog," you say, puzzled, "And it isn't a fish. Oh, I know—you are a cat!"

- **Categories.** Take turns listing farm animals, fruits, wild animals, 'things we eat' or other familiar items. Note them on paper, then count them.

- **Visit the post office.** A good time to visit is early morning. Let your children make cards or write letters, then put them in self-addressed envelopes. They can buy stamps, put them on the envelopes, then mail them. The card will be delivered to them—like magic.

- **Grow an indoor "lawn."** Put a sponge in a dish half-filled with water. Sprinkle with seed, then push seeds gently into the sponge with a fork until wet, but not underwater. Water the bottom as needed. In a few weeks, you can "mow" your lawn with safety scissors.

- **Paint "blobs."** Fold construction paper in half, drop tempera paint into the fold, then let your children press on the outside. Some may want to finish their picture with crayons.

- **Make cards.** Let your children tear hearts from construction paper, then decorate them with stickers, paper doilies, glitter, etc. Or, cut heart shapes, then let them tear the decorations.

- **The library.** Story hour is a good way to introduce children to the library. As soon as they show any interest in books, get them cards and help them choose their own books.

- **Magnify.** Use a plastic magnifying glass to discover details of familiar objects. Your children can examine their hands, a coin, a bottle cap, some bark, a piece of newsprint or a leaf.

Ages 4-6

- **"Drawing our Family"** book. Cover cardboard or an old picture album with fabric or contact paper. Fill the book with blank pages so your children can draw pictures about your family. They might draw their bedroom, tree or pet. Write down their description of the picture.

- **Snow play.** All family members can help clear snow from sidewalks or cars. You also might shovel for an older or sick neighbor. Look for animal tracks or make your own. Make paths, angels or other shapes. Inner tubes, boxes or trays make good sleds for younger children.

- **Night walk.** A walk around your neighborhood or community is particularly fun on snowy or moonlit nights. Your children can use a flashlight. Things look and sound different at night.

- **Pretend car drive** around town. Set two chairs side by side, then give your children pot lids or pie tins for steering wheels. Climb in the "car" and let them drive you around. Do they know how to get to grandmother's house? Can they get you to the grocery store?

- **Animal lotto.** Cut pictures from magazines, or draw pictures of animals. Try to get two of each kind. Try also to get adults and babies. Include birds, reptiles and fish. Then, play matching games. Match the same kinds of animals. Get all the big animals, or little ones.

- **Grow an indoor orchard.** Start a little orchard from citrus seeds. All you need are soil-filled flower pots. Dry seeds for a few hours, then place several in each pot. Cover with a quarter inch of soil and water, then place them on a sunny windowsill. When shoots grow two inches, snip all but the strongest in each pot. Don't pull—you may disturb the other's root.

- **Room decorating.** Mount a bulletin board for drawings, posters, etc. Suggest the children cut out such things as pumpkins in fall, snow persons in winter and daffodils in spring. They also can make their own wastebasket from a round gallon container or cardboard box. Cover it with construction or adhesive paper and decorate it with odds and ends.

- **Homemade puzzles.** Paste a picture on a piece of cardboard, then cut it into four or five pieces. As your child gets more skilled, cut smaller pieces.

Ages 7-8

- **Window herb garden.** Good herbs include chives, parsley, mint, dill, marjoram, sage, savory and thyme. Label pots on a tray. Water every four or five days. When the plants are four inches tall, you can pick the leaves. Cut chives with scissors about an inch above the soil.

- **Seed catalog cards.** Cut pictures from old catalogs or magazines. Using a glue stick or school paste, paste them onto blank pieces of paper, folded into cards. Your child can write her own messages and use them for gift cards or thank you notes.

- **Paint snow scenes** on your windows. Mix glass paint, whitening or Bon Ami with enough water to make a paste-like consistency. Paint on the window with a brush.

- **Hold a play or talent show.** Present a 15-minute play. Have a good reader read the lines while others act. Scenery isn't needed unless you have a hungry "set designer." Shy children can direct. Everyone has a skill, be it tumbling or singing, for a talent show.

- **Design a family monogram.** Use your family's name. All members should have their say about the design. You could make the housemark into a stamp and mark your books and toys.

- **Communication neighbors.** Call your local radio or TV station to find a good time to visit. Most stations will be glad to take you on a tour. You may see a show being produced, or visit a studio and control room. Your child will learn how programs are broadcast to your home.

- **Family community team.** Teach kids how to get a task done by dividing it into parts. Think of jobs you can do together, like preparing meals, cleaning the house, planning a spring park cleanup or shoveling walks for a shut-in neighbor. Do them.

- **Decorate paper.** Stamp pictures on paper, using a stamp pad and stampers. Stampers can be anything from paper clips, spools, keys, buttons and cookie cutters to apple slices. Use the paper for book covers, gift boxes, letters, etc.

For more information on "Family Time," a program designed to help parents and children spend time together, contact your county Penn State Cooperative Extension office.

SEEK AND FIND

FIND THESE WORDS IN THE PUZZLE BELOW.

CLIPPERS	HOSE	SEED
EDGER	MOWER	SHOVEL
FERTILIZER	MULCH	SPREADER
GLOVES	RAKE	SPRINKLER

THE WORDS READ UP, DOWN AND ACROSS.

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A F S D G L O V E S
F E G H H R S E E P
M R M O W E R W R R
U T O S I D U Y T I
L I P E R A K E M N
C L I P P E R S N K
H I E E D R E V B L
Z Z D I V P G C W E
S E E D D S D S A R
F R S H O V E L G W
    
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Low Sugar Snacks For Kids Or Adults

Here are ideas for quick and simple, low-sugar snacks. They are good for adults and easy enough for kids to make with minimum supervision.

- **Skewer red pepper squares,** pineapple chunks and green pepper squares on a toothpick.

- **Spread bean dip** on baked tortilla chips. Top with a sprinkle of reduced-fat Monterey Jack cheese and a jalapeno slice. Place under the broiler just until cheese melts.

- **Mix one-half cup peanut butter** with one-half cup crispy

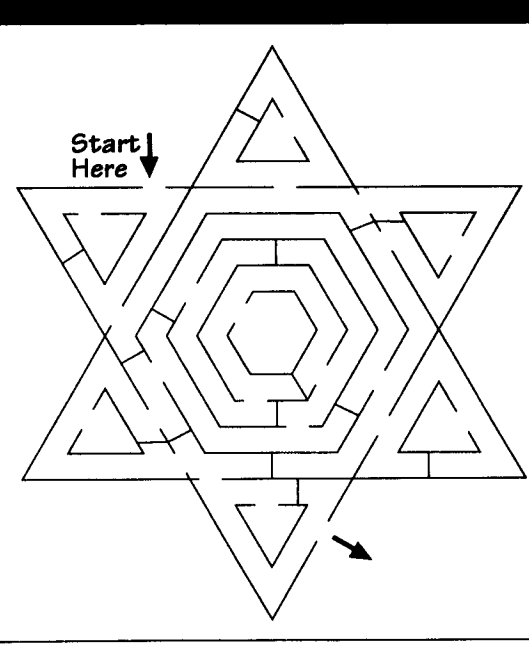
rice cereal. Spread on two quartered apples.

- **Spread nonfat strawberry-flavored cream cheese** on celery sticks and top with holiday sprinkles.

- **Especially for kids:** Cut whole wheat bread, low-fat ham and low-fat cheese with cookie cutters. These will make open face sandwiches.

- **Use cookie cutters** to cut out shapes from flour tortillas. Dust with cinnamon and a little bit of sugar or sugar substitute. Bake at 375 degrees just until brown.

MAZE



Smart Stuff WITH TWIG WALKINGSTICK

How do insects stay warm in the winter?
On cold, winter days animals stay warm with their heavy fur coat, people bundle up in a thick layer of clothes, and most insects make their own antifreeze! Antifreeze literally means to not freeze—it's a special liquid made out of alcohol that won't get hard the way ice does, even at very low temperatures. Take water, for example. It turns into ice at 32 degrees Fahrenheit. But antifreeze stays liquid even when it gets much, much colder. When you mix antifreeze with other liquids, it keeps them from freezing as fast. That's why you put antifreeze in a car's radiator—it keeps the water there from turning into ice, which can really damage a car.

Insect antifreeze works the same way—except that insects make their own. The shorter, colder days of early fall let insects know it's time to conserve energy stores for the long winter ahead. When insects burn fewer energy stores, a sweet, sticky alcohol called glycerol builds up in their bodies.

Glycerol works like the car antifreeze. When it mixes around inside an insect's body, the whole insect becomes more freeze-resistant. In fact, our entomologist friends say some insects even tolerate temperatures far below zero. Now that's a way to keep warm!

Scientifically yours, Twig

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Have a question?
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