



# **CMNH Play Based Learning Tips**

At The Children's Museum of New Hampshire we've been inviting children to engage in hands-on Play Based Learning since we opened in 1983. However, we realize it's not as easy in a classroom or at home. Each week we will be sharing Play Based Learning tips to help caregivers and teachers encourage play!

# CMNH Play Based Learning Tip **1**

## What is Play Based Learning?

Play Based Learning is essentially exactly what the name suggests--children learning through play. We know children learn through play, but it can be hard to know which activities will target specific skills or learning. We will talk about this more with future tips! A few basics about choosing activities:

- Some toys or play materials encourage learning more than others. Choosing interactive activities over "entertainment" can keep children engaged
- Open-ended: items that can be used in many different ways encourage creative play
- Child-led: "free play" means that children get to choose which activity they would like to do, while grown-ups provide the choices
- Almost all of what we offer at the museum is play based learning!



# CMNH Play Based

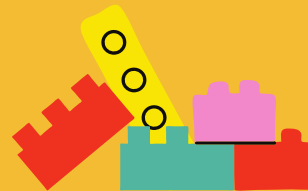


## Learning Tip 2

### Creating Play Space at Home

**EVEN WITH LIMITED SPACE AND MATERIALS, KIDS CAN LEARN FROM PLAY!**

Play Based Learning experts suggest that Montessori style play areas can be a good approach to use for play based learning at home. Open ended activities that allow for creativity work well, and it helps to have a defined play space where kids know they can use any materials available. Adding one new or different activity choice per week can help keep children engaged. This can be a new theme using their toys, nature items, or other objects from around the home. Borrowing library books also helps to add variety without purchasing anything new, and can be a great way to explore new topics.



#### A FEW GUIDELINES

- Have a limited number of activities, and cater to their interests
- Set up materials at their level & let them choose
- Choose engaging activities over entertainment
- Mix in a variety of activities & add something different each week
- Use a cozy space where few things are "off limits" so kids can focus on play
- Trays help separate activities & contain messes!

# Sunflower Exploration



## Three Sunflower Activity Ideas from Little Pine Learners:

Get a Sunflower! If kids can pick their own at a farm or market, that adds to the fun!

### Sunflower Seed Fine Motor

- 1 Have children use tweezers to take apart the sunflower, and get the seeds out
- 2 Draw or print a sunflower template and have children use a paint brush to sweep the seeds to the center of the flower drawing
- 3 When the exploration is done, use the seeds to create sunflower art by glueing them to the template or drawing!



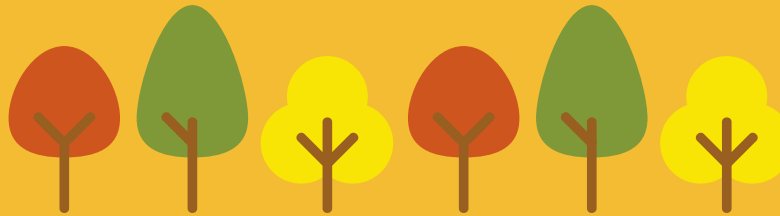
Save the extra seeds to make a bird feeder or simply scatter for birds in your yard!



# CMNH Play Based Learning Tip **3**

Each week we will be sharing Play Based Learning tips to help caregivers and teachers encourage play! This week, we are sharing some seasonal fall activities for exploration and outdoor play.

## Fall Leaf Fun



### ***SORTING CAN BE SCIENCE & MATH!***

This week we are sharing some fall leaf activities, such as collecting leaves, sorting them by color and size, and examining them with a magnifying glass. Children love to play in the leaves, and with a little direction from grown-ups, science and math activities can be done with fall leaves, too!

- Free Play is child-directed play, so an activity the child chooses, like jumping in a pile of leaves or tossing them in the air is free play
- Grown-up directed play involves guidance from an adult, even though children can work independently once they are set up
- Counting, sorting, and organizing leaves are examples of grown-up directed play. Sorting and counting items, and looking for patterns can build early math and science skills



# Collecting and Sorting Fall Leaves

- Sort by color: put leaves in rainbow order
- Sort by size: Put leaves in order by size
- Sort by shape: put leaves that look alike together
- Use a magnifying glass to examine leaves (can be done outside or inside in a tray)





# CMNH Play Based Learning Tip **4**

Each week we will be sharing Play Based Learning tips to help caregivers and teachers encourage play! This week, we are sharing a simple fall leaf activity for practicing making observations, and comparisons.



## Colors of Fall

**ASKING QUESTIONS AND MAKING  
OBSERVATIONS**



Seasonal activities are a good jumping off point for making observations, and helping children to recognize patterns. If there's a favorite tree in your yard or on a walk, try making some observations about how it has changed. Ask questions like "what do you notice about the tree today?" and "Does anything look different to you?" Questions help children to think more deeply and come up with answers or more questions! Statements like "look at the tree," or "the leaves are changing" are still helpful, but asking questions can lead to deeper conversations and spark curiosity.

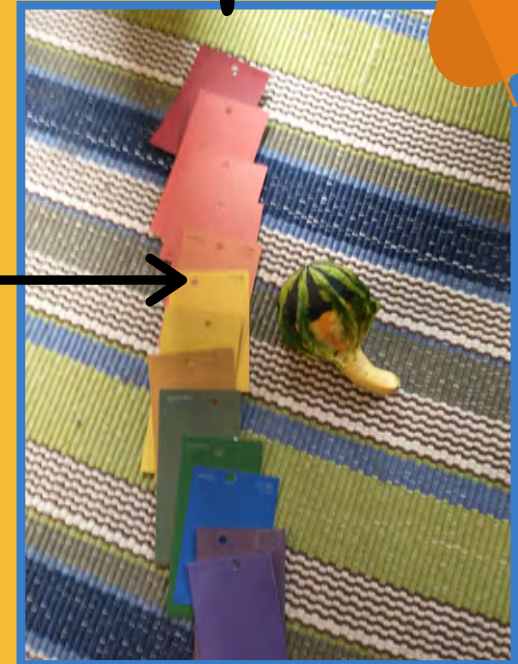
- Try a fall leaf scavenger hunt! Get some free paint sample cards from a hardware store, and use a hole puncher to punch a hole in each card. Children can use this a "view finder" to find a leaf that is the exact same color as the card
- Borrow a field guide with pictures from your library to carry on walks, and use it to help identify leaves and answer questions you are unsure of.



# Exploring Fall Colors With Paint Samples



- 1 Pick up some paint samples from the hardware store, or use colorful card stock. Punch a hole in the corner of each one



- 2 Hole punch each one again to create a "view finder" for matching up colors



- 3 Try to find natural items that perfectly match the color cards! Keep them together with a pipe cleaner or string to carry them on your walk!

