

Values Curriculum:

Sukkot: Welcoming Guests

OVERVIEW	This session explores the holiday of Sukkot, the Jewish harvest festival, and its central theme of hospitality. Students learn about making & decorating a sukkah and welcoming guests into their homes or sukkot.
OBJECTIVE	To become familiar with the key elements of the holiday of Sukkot, including building a sukkah and welcoming guests.
VALUE(S)	<i>Hachnasat Orchim</i> (Welcoming Guests)
STORY	"The Vanishing Gourds: A Sukkot Mystery" by Susan Axe-Bronk
MATERIALS	Paper chain makings, Legos or other building blocks, Pipe cleaners
AT HOME CHALLENGE	Students will take portions of a paper chain home to decorate for sukkot. Students will think about real and imagined guests they would like to invite to their home or sukkah during this holiday.

Materials List

Activity One

- Legos
- If legos are not available, use other building materials: blocks, magnetic tiles, recycled materials
- Plant matter: twigs, strips of plant material (grass or reeds)

Activity Two

- Pipe cleaners in a variety of colors
- String or yarn
- Scissors

Gathering Activity

- Colorful paper, pre-cut into strips
- Markers
- Staplers

Opening/Closing Circle

- Book: The Vanishing Gourds: A Sukkot Mystery by Susan Axe-Bronk
- Big pad of paper and markers
- At Home Challenge Sheet

Gathering Activity: Paper Chains (15 Minutes)

Children will make a paper chain to take home to decorate for Sukkot.

1. Gather children around a table with paper chain materials laid out.
2. Have each child choose a piece of paper that they especially like and write their name and/or draw a special picture on it.
3. Have each child make that strip of paper into a ring by forming a circle with it and stapling it to itself.
4. Each child continues to build a paper chain by choosing another slip of paper, looping it through the first one, and stapling it to itself. The third slip is added to the second and so on.
5. Children can work in pairs if they would rather; they should start by making a paper loop to connect their original rings.
6. Children may continue until they run out of time or paper.



Opening Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle and begin with a melody, a niggun or a greeting song such as Hineh Ma Tov.

At the end of the welcome song, link everyone's paper chains together into one big chain. Notice with the children how big and beautiful the chain is when we bring all the pieces together. Leave the paper chain in the middle of the circle.

Tell about today's theme:

- Today we are learning about Sukkot
- What do we already know about Sukkot?
- Sukkot is: a fall harvest festival, a time to celebrate our many blessings, zman simchateinu/a time of joy and happiness, a time for welcoming friends and family into our homes, celebrated by building and gathering in a sukkah
- Bringing people together to celebrate is like bringing our paper chains together; each of us brings something beautiful and amazing and when we put them together they are even more amazing and beautiful.

Introduce today's Hebrew words: *Sukkah* & *Ushpiz*

- Everyone put your hands above your head. Say "Su" ... and move your hands apart from each other (left and right above you). Say "Kah" ... and bring your hands down to the ground at your sides.
- A sukkah is a booth or temporary little house in the backyard (or on the deck) where people live during Sukkot. It has a roof and 3 sides.
- Everyone make your hand like you are knocking on a door. Say "Ush." Then make your hand like you are opening the door. Say "Piz."
- Ushpiz means guest. At Sukkot we welcome special guests, ushpizin, along with our friends and family, to our sukkah or our homes.

Story (20 Minutes)

Introduce the Story — The Vanishing Gourds: A Sukkot Mystery

- Ask the children if they have ever built or decorated a sukkah.
- What kinds of things might we use to decorate a sukkah?
- The story we're going to read is about a child named Sara. Let's find out how she decorates her family's sukkah.

Read the Story. Ask some good Questions.

- **Check for Understanding**
 - ◇ What did Sara like to decorate her sukkah with?
 - ◇ What happened to Sara's decorations when her unexpected guests, first the cat, then the squirrels, came to visit?
 - ◇ How did Sara and the squirrels help each other?
- **Get Curious**
 - ◇ What are kids wondering about the story?
 - ◇ Encourage kids to wonder about WHY something happened in the story, WHAT might happen next, or HOW someone did something.
 - ◇ Record these questions on the big pad of paper.
 - ◇ These questions don't have to have answers – though kids are welcome to try and answer each other's questions.
 - ◇ Have kids respond to each other's questions with "good question!" and a thumbs up
- **Give one more Question to Ponder**
 - ◇ I'm wondering: What did Sara learn from her relationship with the squirrels?

10 Minute Break

Activity One: Lego Sukkot (25 Minutes)

Children will make sukkot out of legos (or other building materials) following a few key rules of sukkah building.

Introduce the Activity:

In our story, Sara's family built a sukkah (make the sukkah vocabulary movement). What did you notice or what do you know about building a sukkah? What does a sukkah look like? How is it shaped? What is it made out of?

Today we are going to build our own sukkot following the rules of making a sukkah.

Here are the rules for us to follow:

- Must have at least 3 sides (some people leave the 4th side open to receive guests)
- Made of anything but has to be strong enough to withstand the wind
- Have a roof made from things grown in the earth
- Have a roof that makes more shade than sun but through which you can see the stars

Do you think you can make sukkah that fits these rules?

1. Have each child gather up some building materials and bring them to their spot at the table or on the floor. (Children can work in pairs on this.)
2. Build and play.
3. When students have completed their base, have them take some shach/roofing material to make their roof.
4. When you have 5 minutes left and/or most students seem done with their work, do a group gallery walk so that everyone can see each other's creations.



Activity Two: Pipe Cleaner Ushpizin (15 Minutes)

Children will make ushpizin out of pipe cleaners to hang in a sukkah or in their homes during the festival of Sukkot.

Introduce the Activity:

In our story, Sara's sukkah had some visitors. Who were Sara's sukkah guests?

During Sukkot we invite special guests to our sukkah called ushpizin (make the ushpiz vocabulary movement). Traditionally ushpizin are our ancestors, Jews from the past who helped to build and lead our people. We invite their spirit to join us during Sukkot.

(For a list of traditional ushpizin look here: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ushpizin-welcoming-guests/>)

On Sukkot, we invite real live guests, friends and family and neighbors, plus other people we wish could join us in celebration.

Today we are going to make our own ushpizin thinking about real or imaginary people near and far who we wish we could invite to our home or sukkah.



1. Ask children to think of someone they would like to invite and share that name with the group or share it with a friend.
2. Have each child choose a few pipe cleaners.
3. Either craft the first one together OR demonstrate crafting one pipe cleaner person to start.
4. Make a small loop with one end of the pipe cleaner for the head and twist to hold. Leave a short piece hanging out of the loop; that's the first arm.
5. Double the pipe cleaner back on itself to the same length as the first arm to make the second arm.
6. Wrap the rest of the pipe cleaner around the next and then point it downward for the body.
7. To make the legs, make a small bend where you want them to start. Double the pipe cleaner back on itself to make the first leg. Wrap the extra around the waist and put the remainder down next to the other leg to complete. (For complete step by step instructions visit: <https://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-make-a-Pipe-Cleaner-Stick-Figure/>)
8. Children can use other pipe cleaners to add clothing to their people. Or they can make more than one person, time permitting.
9. Children can tie a string around the head of their pipe cleaner ushpiz so that they can be hung in a sukkah or in their home for Sukkot.



Closing Circle (10 Minutes)

Gather everyone into a circle with their pipe cleaner ushpizin.

Have each child share their pipe cleaner ushpiz including saying who they are and why they chose that person to be their Sukkot guest.

Review the Hebrew Words of the Day:

- Have the children practice the Hebrew words with their bodies:
- *Su* (hands above your head and move them apart from each other to the left and right above you)
Kah (bring your hands down to the ground at your sides).
- *Ush* (hand knocking on a door) *Piz* (hand opening the door).
- Have the children say what *Sukkah* and *Ushpiz* mean (booth and guest)

Pass out the At Home Challenge Sheet

Sing a goodbye song like *Shalom Chaverim* or *Oseh Shalom*.

At Home Challenge: Welcome Guests

Today, in celebration of Sukkot, we learned how to build and decorate a sukkah and to welcome guests. We made paper chains, small sukkahs, and ushpizin/guests to invite into our celebration of Sukkot.

Your challenge is to learn something new together.

Here are the next steps to take at home to celebrate Sukkot.

1. Hang the decorations either in your sukkah (if you build one) or near the table where you gather regularly to eat. Leave them up until the end of Sukkot to remind you of the festival.
2. Decide as a family on actual friends or family you can invite over during Sukkot for a festive meal, either in your sukkah (if you build one) or in your home. And then invite them!
3. Have your child tell you about their ushpiz and why they chose them. Consider as a family other ushpizin you might invite into your Sukkot celebration. Read more about ushpizin here:
<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ushpizin-welcoming-guests/>