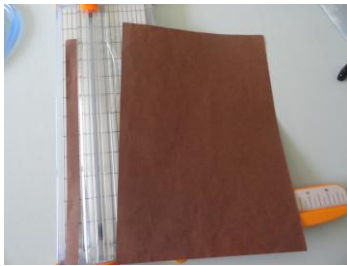
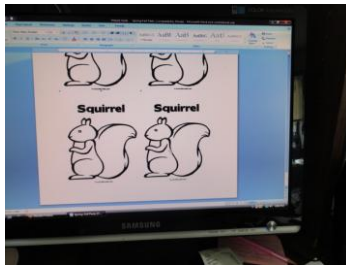


Spring/ Fall Squirrels Birthday Party

First, you will need to make or buy invitations for your child's birthday party. They are easy to make, and cheaper – if you only need a few. Remember, you aren't going to invite half the neighborhood! Here's how:



1. Trim brown paper to fit in the printer, 8 ½ x 11



2. Find Squirrel Shapes at end of this document



3. Print squirrels on brown paper



4. Cut squirrels apart



5. Print information, cut out, paste on card back.



6. Child can decorate card with appropriate stickers.

Two Year Olds love make-believe play, and enjoy watching squirrels. For this party, your two-year-old and guests will make a squirrel picture, hunt for nuts, sort nuts, hear a story about a squirrel, and have squirrel-food for lunch.

Arrival Activities:

Art. Print enough copies of the larger squirrel template on page four for your child and each guest. Use white, extra sturdy printer paper. Set out brown, gray or red crayons for children to color their squirrel. Set out scraps of brown, gray, or red felt that they can glue on the tail. Alternatively, you could color sand, salt, or sugar and have them glue that on the tail. Your guests' parent can help them with their project. Make sure they have their name on it so they can take it home.

Nut Sort: Set out a bowl of mixed nuts in their shells: walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts, etc. Set out an egg carton and encourage child to sort the nuts. He might sort them by color, or size, or variety. Once sorted, provide child and his parent with nut crackers. Let him taste each

nut – if he is not nut allergic! Omit this activity if any child has a peanut allergy. They can sort colored pompoms instead.

Games:

Squirrel Nut Hide & Seek

Get a bag of nuts in their shells from the grocery store, or if this is a fall party, you might find them under someone's tree. You can use walnuts, hickory nuts, pecans, almonds... be sure to find out beforehand if any of your child's guests are nut allergic! If they are, you can substitute ping pong balls or small plastic toys for the nuts. Hide the nuts in the sandbox. If you do not have a sandbox (get one!) you can hide the nuts around the backyard. If you have to move this party indoors because of the weather, you can put paper cups upside down all around the room, and put nuts under half of the cups. The children have to "hop" around the room, lifting the cups to find their nuts. Give them a lunch bag or sand pail to gather their nuts in. One last option: you can fill a small splash pool with dry rice, and bury the nuts in that for the children to find. If indoors, place a large sheet under the splash pool to aid in the clean-up.

Squirrel Story

Gather the children around to hear you read a story about squirrels. A good choice might be "The Busy Little Squirrel" by Nancy Tafuri, or "Miss Suzy" by Miriam Young, both available at the Raising Creative Children book store.

Squirrely Painting

Finger painting is a great activity for young children. You can use freezer paper, if you don't have finger paint paper. Plain paper is not sturdy enough and will shred. Put squirts of brown, gray, and red paint on their paper and let them smoosh it around. Talk about how there are brown squirrels, gray squirrels, and red squirrels. Some places have small black squirrels. Some have white squirrels. Squirrels live almost all over the world! You can expand the experience by shaking a few coffee grounds, salt, sand, or sugar into the paint. Ask the child how the paint feels now. For very young children, you can use chocolate pudding for fingerpaint, but they might not be hungry for lunch then.

Make a Squirrel Feeder

This is a fun and inexpensive craft, but will require adult supervision. Thankfully, all your guests' parents have hung around! Get a scrap of board for each guest –at least 4x6 inches, and pre-drill four holes in each. The holes should be about two inches apart, to allow room for the corn cobs. Buy four large nails for each board, slightly larger than your pre-drilled holes. Set each board over an empty coffee can, and have several small, lightweight hammers available. Each child pounds four nails through the pre-drilled holes. Then the parent takes four corn cobs and jams one onto each of the exposed nail tips. The child will take his squirrel feeder home – it doubles as your party favor. You can mount your squirrel feeder to a tree branch, window ledge, porch railing, or anywhere you can reach it to refill it and the squirrels can find it. It should be out of reach of young children, so they aren't injured when the corncobs are gone and the nails are exposed.

Foods: Squirrels eat mostly nuts and seeds. In the spring, it is the hardest time of year for them, as the nuts they stored may have sprouted, and new nuts have not yet grown. Sometimes, squirrels have been known to eat insects or small lizards and mice. Squirrels do like bits of fruit for a treat.

Squirrel Surprise
Trail mix

Fresh Fruit
Apple Juice or Milk

Birthday Cake
Ice cream

Squirrel surprise is also known as “pigs in a blanket”. Buy tiny hot dogs – the kind that are the size of your pinky finger. Buy a container of crescent roll dough. Cut the crescent roll triangles in half – they are too big, otherwise. Wrap each little hot dog up in dough and place on ungreased cookie sheet, seam-side down. Bake according to directions on the dough wrapper. Some kids like them plain, others want to dip them in either ketchup or honey.

Home-made trail mix is easy to make, and you can vary the ingredients if any child has food allergies. The original recipe, GORP, stands for “good old raisins and peanuts”. One in ten children is peanut-allergic, though, so it may be wise to omit peanuts entirely. You can add any of the following ingredients in any amount – just so you have enough to go around for the children and their parents. For added fun, set some trail mix (minus the chocolate) out on a porch railing for the squirrels! Add:

Cheerios
Raisins
Dried pineapple
Craisins

M&Ms
Chocolate chips
White chocolate chips
Butterscotch chips

Sunflower seeds
Pumpkin seeds
Pine nuts
Dried bananas

Presents:

A great present to give your child this year would be a sandbox, if you don't already have one. They are easy to make. You can get fancy, and build a wooden, bottomless box with seats, or simply dig a wide, shallow hole and fill it with sand. You can buy bags of sandbox sand, which is convenient, especially if you have a very small sandbox. You would need about 30 50 lb bags to fill a sandbox that is 8 feet by 4 feet. It may be cheaper for a larger sandbox to have a load of washed sand delivered. In my city, washed sand is only \$24.25 for a cubic yard (2700 pounds) with a \$40 delivery charge. Washed sand is perfect sandbox sand. For more information on building your sandbox, you can read my article at: <http://raisingcreativechildren.com/backyard-sandbox/> . If you plan to do this in advance, you could suggest to your guests' parents that your child could use sandbox toys for a birthday gift. You might get some duplicate gifts, but then your child would have some to share.

Departure:

You will want to end the party while everyone is still having fun, but before anyone is overtired. You can put away the paints and craft materials. Then gather up the semi-dried paintings and squirrel feeders to hand to the parents. If they haven't taken the hint, you can announce that it is your child's nap time.

Squirrel



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