



### Winter Bird Treats

Feeding birds is an ideal winter activity. By scheduling daily trips outdoors to replenish your stock, you can incorporate Science and Technology in its natural setting (*Earth & Space Science*, e.g., inside / outside, weather, temperature, seasons and *Life Sciences / Biology*, e.g., the concept that living things have needs and identification of animal habitats). Making bird treats includes a range of basic concepts (e.g., shapes, texture, wet/dry, in/out, on /off), action-related vocabulary (press, spread, stir), and purposeful hand skills.

Here are two easy recipes/activities to choose from. Each activity can be done individually, or adapted for small groups. You could try setting up both activities at the same time in the classroom, with students working simultaneously at the different, theme-related activities.

#### **Bagel Treats with Peanut Butter**

You will need:

- One dozen bagels (preferably stale)
- One big jar of peanut butter
- One bag of birdseed
- Ribbon, or string
- Butter knife for spreading
- Plates, or trays

Split the bagels in half. Spread each half with peanut butter. Press the peanut butter side into a shallow pan of birdseed. Hang from trees with ribbon or string. Note: If you want to encourage independence, but your students don't have the motor planning skills for spreading independently, try placing the peanut butter in a shallow tub and simply pressing the bagel half into it (if the peanut butter is too thick, try adding a little oil to it



so it sticks easily).



For each student to make his or her own bagel treats individually, set out the needed supplies on individual trays for each student. Or, break the activity down into steps and set the sequence of steps up assembly-line style, letting each student work their way down the line (e.g., set out bagel halves at the first space, then the peanut butter, followed by the bird seed. Provide assistance and positive reinforcement at each step as needed. For more independent students, set up a communal

supply station and let your students set up their own workspace.

This activity can also be done cooperatively. Assign a student to each step, or to each workstation. A thought for the first station could be to create a job of simply pulling semi-cut bagel halves apart (*two hands together, using symmetrical movement, while maintaining grasp*). This might be a good activity for a student who is tactile defensive and doesn't like to touch sticky material, or for a student that needs a short, defined activity that allows him or her to participate briefly before moving to a preferred activity.



Remember that the finished product doesn't have to look nice and neat. Sporadic splotches of peanut butter and birdseed on the bagel halves will make the birds just as happy!



## Bird Seed Cookies

You will need: (This makes two 3-inch cookies)

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup birdseed
- 1 Tablespoon of flour
- 2 Tablespoons of water
- Bowls
- Spoons
- Oil for wiping or spraying
- Cookie sheets with foil, or small foil trays
- Cookie cutters
- Straws
- Ribbon, or string

Mix together the birdseed, flour and water. Spray, or wipe a cookie cutter with oil (staff can perform this step) and place it on a foil-lined cookie sheet. Pack the mixture into the cookie cutter. Insert a straw near the top to make a hole. Bake the cookie (with the straw still inserted) in a 170-degree oven until the cookie is hard, about one hour. Let it cool. Remove the cookie cutter and the straw. Thread a ribbon through the hole and hang on a branch.



Reinforce social skills by setting this activity up cooperatively. Set up each step as a workstation with enough supplies to make multiple batches. Assign a student to each station. For example, the birdseed station will need several empty bowls, a large open container of birdseed and a one-cup scoop. The student at the birdseed station scoops the birdseed into the bowl and passes the bowl along to their peer at the next station. You can make simple recipe cards illustrating the direction at each station using the appropriate medium. For a student who has a hard time sitting down, but is organized by movement, put them at the end of the assembly line and assign them the job of bringing the cookie sheets to the kitchen.

Make checking on and replenishing bird treats outdoors a daily, or weekly routine. Verbally describe the transition to outdoors, for example, “Here we are outside, it’s cold

outside, we need warm clothes to keep our bodies warm...” You might want to begin by simply having your students search for a tree (make sure you are close to one!). Incorporate scanning by searching for last week’s treats. Reinforce spatial and directional concepts (e.g., reach up high, bend down low”). Look for ways to expand on the bird theme. Explore a nest and compare birdcalls. Teach what you learn to other classes or families. Think about doing an entire unit on birds.



Taking care of your schoolyard, or neighborhood birds through the winter is a good lesson in responsibility and reinforces the concept that living things have needs.

