

Theme: CIRCUS

Gross Motor (Indoor & Outdoor):

- Pretend to be a circus clown; act silly as you march around the yard
- Put a stuffed monkey on a large plastic spoon and have relay races
- Hide pictures of circus animals around the yard and let the children look for them (like an Easter egg hunt). Children have to name the animal and make the sound associated with that animal. Let them tell you what that animal does in the circus.
- Climb like a monkey
- Swing your arm like an elephant trunk
- Walk on the "high wire" (using a 1x4 board flat on the ground—great, even for toddlers!)
- Let children crawl through a "tunnel"
- Set up an obstacle course in the yard!

Math Activities:

- Shapes – how many shapes can you see? (show pictures of typical circus scenes or create your own)
- Count the balls the monkey is juggling
- Do simple addition and subtraction
- Likenesses and differences—show 3 pictures of a monkey, for example, with one of them showing something different (purple hat instead of green) and let the children identify what it is that's different
- How many blocks can you stack without them falling? (balance)

Science Activities:

- Using plastic circus animals in the water table, check to see which ones float vs. sink
- Ant farm
- Footprints of elephants, monkeys, horses, dogs to examine (photos or drawings)
- Listen to sounds of circus animals if you have a recording of them
- What do circus animals eat?
- Make a display of various pictures you find on the internet and let children examine them close-up with a magnifying glass—what details do you see?

Small Motor/Manipulatives:

- Blocks
- Stack toys
- Puzzles (circus theme is good, but not necessary)
- Trace the letter "C" – put a big "C" on the table with blue tape and let the children trace it with their small cars, fingers, etc.
- String popcorn and hang the string outside for the birds and squirrels to eat the popcorn.

Snacks:

Animal crackers
Bananas
Ice cream
Popcorn
Corndogs

Special Visual Aids/Room Set-Up/Field Trips:

Visit the zoo or go to the circus, if one is in town

Decorate the room with circus-themed pictures, drawings, etc.

Let the children help you make a large mobile of circus animals, etc., to hang from the ceiling

Songs & Fingerplays: <http://www.teachingheart.net/circustheme.html>

Art:

- Paint pictures – ask children to draw a circus scene, their favorite circus animal, etc.
- Spatter painting
- Paint the fence outside
- Draw with crayons around a hole-in-the-paper (suggestion: cut an elephant out of the paper before the kids color and see what they come up with!)
- Glue colored pompoms onto the clown's suit (children can color the suit before adding the pompoms)

Dramatic Play:

Large shoes

Bright hats and clothes

Capes

Set up a "popcorn stand"

Books:

If I Ran the Circus, by Dr. Seuss

Clifford at the Circus, by Norman Bridwell

Curious George's First Words at the Circus, by H. A. Rey

Sandy's Circus: A Story about Alexander Calder, by T. L. Stone & B. Kulikov

The Secret Circus, by Johanna Wright

Cam Jansen #7 Mystery of the Circus Clowns, by D. A. Adler

All Aboard the Circus McGurkus, by Dr. Seuss

Emeline at the Circus, by Marjorie Priceman

Star of the Circus: My Little Sister and Me, by M. Samson, M. B. Samson, and J. Aruego

Miss Bindergarten Plans a Circus with Ki, by J. Slate & A. Wolfe

The Circus is Coming, by H. Knight

Morris and Boris at the Circus, by B. Wiseman

Spot Goes to the Circus, by E. Hill

Circle Time Activities (include reading time & literacy skills):

- There are many activities listed at <http://www.teachingheart.net/circustheme.html>. Others:
- Discuss the letter "C" and the two sounds it makes, both of which are in the word "circus".
- Talk about magic shows and let children pretend to be magicians
- Using a touchy-feely box, let children stick their hands in to see what comes out (a LONG scarf, for example).
- Cut bright-colored circles for the children to sit on for circle time
- Read about the circus
- Sing songs and do action rhymes and fingerplays related to the circus
- Pop popcorn from a hot air popper in the center of the room. Put a clean white sheet on the floor and put the popper in the center. ALWAYS SUPERVISE. Make a rule that everybody has to stay off the sheet. Once popped, the popper can be removed and the children can eat the popcorn.
- What's the history behind the circus?
- Who were Barnum and Bailey?
- Play "memory game" (i.e., match game) with pictures and words related to the circus