

Theme: Railroads

Gross Motor (Indoor & Outdoor):

- ✓ **Teddy Bear Train:** Obtain a box that the teddy bear will fit into. Have the child decorate as desired. When dry, poke a hole big enough to thread a piece of yarn through. Tie a piece of yarn, just long enough for the child to hold, while the box rests on the floor. Let the child pull the train around with their Teddy Bear.
- ✓ **Tricycles** – ride around pretending they're trains. Children can wave the flags they made in art.

Math Activities:

- ✓ How big is the train? A train engine weighs more than 3 cars! Using a balance scale, have children put something on one end that is 3 times the weight of the other side.
- ✓ Have all the children line up and make a train. Instruct the children that one short whistle means stop and two short whistles means go slowly. If they do well with the two signals add more, three whistles mean back up, 1 long whistle, stop and turn around etc.
- ✓ Cut out several train shapes and put numbers on them. Children line them up in numerical order.
- ✓ Set up a few boxes to look like train cars and have children sort things into the boxes by color, texture, etc.
- ✓ Cut out trains of different sizes; let children line them up smallest to largest, largest to smallest.

Science Activities:

- ✓ Teach children to make train whistle sounds by blowing across the top of a plastic bottle. This activity can be part of your circle time activity to discuss safety rules.
- ✓ In the kitchen, demonstrate how steam is made. Boil water in a tea kettle or just a small pan. Hold a sheet of construction paper over the steam so the children can see the moisture coming from the steam.
- ✓ How far will it go? Place a train at the top of a ramp and ask the children how far it will go. Record their answers with making tape with each child's name on it. If you do this on carpet first switch to a smooth surface and try it and vice versa. Try a different train or a car.

Small Motor/Manipulatives:

- ✓ Blocks
- ✓ Legos
- ✓ Train set
- ✓ Train puzzles

Snacks:

- ✓ Use club crackers for the cars, cheerios for wheels, and any other food for cargo.
- ✓ Spread peanut butter on a graham cracker, add 2 banana slices for wheels and a triangular piece of cheese for the front of the engine. Use a small cracker for the smoke stack.
- ✓ Cut bread slice into 2 rectangles. Put 1 of the rectangles on a piece of foil and cut the other into 2 squares. Put one of the squares above the rectangle to make a cab for the engine; cut the other square into 2 triangles. Put 1 triangle above the cab and the other in front of the engine. Spread the train with tomato sauce, sprinkle with cheese and add sliced tomatoes for the wheels. Bake for 5 min. at 350°.

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

- ✓ Take a field trip down to your local train station, if you have one. Children will enjoy seeing the trains come/go, see how the tracks are switched, etc.

Songs & Fingerplays:

<http://www.everythingpreschool.com/themes/trains/songs.htm>

<http://www.atozkidsstuff.com/tran.html> (A Peanut Sat on a Railroad Track)

Sources: <http://www.atozkidsstuff.com/tran.html>

<http://www.everythingpreschool.com/themes/trains/more.htm>

<http://www.123child.com/UBB/showthread.php?t=6346>

Books:

Trains (Rockwell)
That's Not My Train (Watt)
Freight Train (Crews)
Curious George Takes a Train (Rey)
Chugga-Chugga-Choo-Choo (Lewis)
The Goodnight Train (Sobel)
My Big Train Book (Priddy)
Two Little Trains (Brown)
Steam, Smoke, and Steel: Back in Time with Trains (O'Brien)
Train Song (Siebert)

The Little Red Caboose (Potter)
Thomas the Tank Engine series (Awdry)
Inside Freight Train (Crews)
Terrific Trains (Mitton)
Big Book of Trains (DK Publishing)
The Best Book of Trains (Balkwill)
I Love Trains (Sturges)
Seymour Simon's Book of Trains (Simon)
Train to Somewhere (Bunting)
Tootle (Crampton)

Dramatic Play:

- ✓ Put numbers on the chairs in the activity listed under "Circle Time". Let children sell tickets for the trip.
- ✓ Engineer cap(s)
- ✓ Overalls
- ✓ Bandanas
- ✓ Suitcases
- ✓ Maps
- ✓ Hole punch (to punch the tickets)
- ✓ Set up a "ticket office"
- ✓ Tie 3 or 4 laundry baskets or boxes together for a train; put a pillow and small blanket in each for children who want to take long train rides.

Art:

- ✓ Give each child a shoebox and an assortment of art supplies. Children can decorate their boxes to look like engines. I like to save ribbon spools and they make great wheels!
- ✓ Make a shape train of circles, triangles, squares, and rectangles.
- ✓ Use inexpensive plastic train tracks to print on paper.
- ✓ Train collage
- ✓ Cut out train shapes from a large piece of art paper. Let children paint their trains.
- ✓ Make flags to wave at the train station by gluing rectangles of fabric onto popsicle sticks. Children can cut their fabric and glue it themselves.

Circle Time Activities:

- ✓ As a group, construct a simple timeline of railroad history. Display pictures to depict different points along the timeline. See <http://www.sdrm.org/history/timeline/> for important milestones; choose 5 or 6 for your timeline. Discuss the steam engine and what it can do.
- ✓ Talk about the Union Pacific. Children can build two separate railroads with long strips of paper; make train cars out of empty cardboard or cereal boxes. Have the two railroads meet at Promontory Point to form the first transcontinental railroad!
<http://www.uprr.com/aboutup/history/lincoln/index.shtml>
- ✓ "T" is for "Train" and for "Trip". Using large appliance boxes, create a large train in which children can play, read books about trains, and take imaginary trips! Children can use kazoos as train whistles!
- ✓ Talk about traffic rules for train tracks, stop lights, etc. Let children practice.
- ✓ Line up enough chairs for the number of children in your group. Children can pretend to take a train ride and talk about the countryside as they pass by. What does the country look like? What does it look like in spring? Summer, fall, winter? How fast are they going?
- ✓ Take a field trip down to your local train station, if you have one. Children will enjoy seeing the trains come/go.
- ✓ Read the story of The Little Engine That Could. Let children tell you something they like to do, or something they do well.