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# Our daily bread

Real Bread Week (22–28 February), is designed to encourage people to bake their own bread or support local bakeries. It provides a great opportunity to immerse children in all things bread-related, with story books and growing activities.



One of the key messages of the week is to get people away from eating mass-produced breads that contain lots of extra preservatives that make the bread last longer, and get back to experiencing traditional, additive-free bread.

These activities revolve around the well-known story of *The Little Red Hen*, and her quest to grow wheat, turn it into flour, and make bread.

You may worry that making fresh bread is expensive, but it really isn't when you work out the cost of the ingredients and the power needed. The biggest cost is the time it takes, but the final product is worth it, and the time it takes can be used to share all sorts of stories, songs and general chat about your day.

## Before you start

As some of the activities suggested will give children the opportunity to make and taste bread, as well as using flour for mark-making opportunities, please double check on the food allergies and intolerances of all the children in your setting.

## Playing and exploring

- Children engage with the story and have a go at predicting what happens next
- They investigate different types of bread
- They experiment with cutting bread into different shapes

Read the story of *The Little Red Hen* together, and perhaps watch an animated version (see

## Outdoor learning

It is possible to grow wheat in ordinary gardens, although you won't be able to grow enough to turn into flour, it is good for enriching soil and it is a very striking plant. Put aside a small patch of your setting garden to let the children plant some wheat seeds. Again, this will allow them to develop their motor skills, their gross motor skills as they dig and prepare the ground, and their fine motor skills as they plant the seeds. It will also allow children to care for the plants and monitor and record the development of the wheat as it grows.



## Resources

- First Favourite Tales: Little Red Hen by Liz Pichon (Ladybird)
- Story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYwjuufc19Q>
- Come Outside: Bread: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYwjuufc19Q>
- Story puppets <https://bit.ly/3mME0bi>
- <https://bit.ly/2lfgHYy>



(the resources box). Encourage children to join in with the 'Not I', repeated refrains. Talk about the story and help the children to retell it verbally and in drawings. Prompt them by asking 'What happened first?', 'And then?', 'What next?'

Provide trays sprinkled with a layer of flour for children to make marks, using their fingers, hands and a variety of tools. You could extend this activity by introducing powder paints and pipettes or spray bottles of water, this will enable children to explore different textures and how they change. They can also explore making marks and colour mixing.

During snack times offer children the opportunity to try different kinds of bread (keeping in mind any allergies or intolerances).

Invite families and communities in your setting to suggest breads from their cultures that you and the children could try. If possible, invite some visitors to come and show children how different types of bread are made. These activities will encourage them to make their own decisions about trying new tastes and textures. While you may want to cut slices of bread, allow children to spread their slice with butter or jam and see if they can cut their slices into triangles, squares or rectangles. You could ask them to cut their piece of bread into two, three, or four pieces.

## Active learning

- Children concentrate on re-telling the story
- They work together to bake bread
- They focus on the story's sequence of events

Provide opportunities for retelling the story by providing sequencing cards, stick puppets, or a small world scene for children to use. They may notice that different versions of the story have different characters (other than the hen); talk with children about whether this matters and how it affects the main episodes of the story. Do the lessons it teaches remain the same?

Encourage them to retell the story; be prepared to prompt by asking 'What happens next?'

This will help them grasp the idea that things happen in a set order. Use this opportunity to do some work with children on the sequence of the day in your setting, focusing on the major events which happen as part of a regular routine.

Encourage children to constantly check what they are doing to ensure that they have the story or day sequences in the right order. Self talk will help them to work out the right sequence and confirm their decisions.

Make bread together. You can use bread mix, where you just have to add oil and water, to make it from scratch, weighing out all the ingredients and mixing them together. This activity will not only encourage maths skills through the weighing and measuring of ingredients, but will also help gross motor skills through the mixing and kneading, and build turn taking as children all have a go at different parts of the process.

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## Creating and thinking critically

- Children problem solve when it comes to growing seeds
- They gain a perspective on time through the growing cycle
- They come up with their own ideas about growing their seeds

Making bread will enable you to share some thinking about how bread is made. After having a discussion, you could watch the 'Come Outside' episode in the resources to see the

industrial process, and then go on to make some in your setting. You could use this opportunity to invite in members of the wider community to make different kinds of bread. Children will be able to explore what happens when you mix wet and dry ingredients and what happens when things are cooked.

Help children to measure out all the ingredients, add them together and mix and knead them. You may need to explain that the process can be a long one, sometimes taking a few hours to complete, but the wait will be worth it for you all to enjoy some delicious fresh bread.

Look at some seeds together (I recommend runner bean or pea seeds), and talk about what they are and what they might become if they are planted. Talk about what seeds need to grow into plants. To see how seeds grow, put some damp paper towel into a plastic pocket and then add a seed. Tape this pocket to the wall (don't staple it, it will leak), at child height. Keep the paper towel damp, and in a few days you will see the seed start to sprout and grow. The children can record the changes in the seed as it begins to sprout. Once the seedling is a good size you can plant it outside and watch it continue to grow and produce beans or peas.

## Observation – gauging progress

Talking about how the Little Red Hen felt when she did all the work while her friends lazed about is an opportunity to observe how much children have remembered about the story and what vocabulary they have acquired.

Ask questions to extend this. How did she feel when her friends wanted to share the bread having done none of the work? What should her friends have done? What could they do differently next time? **eye**

## Key learning points

- Children repeat words and phrases from familiar stories
- They ask questions about the book
- Makes comments and shares their own ideas
- They develop play around favourite stories using props
- They engage in extended conversations about stories, learning new vocabulary

## Key words:

- Flour, yeast, bread, seeds, first, next, then, last, weigh, measure, mix, roll, knead, shape, score, bake, share, work