

The Fall Family Activity Planner

A printable companion to Fall Activities for Kids: 40 Ideas Sorted by the Day You Have

Print this planner and keep it on the fridge. It gives you all forty activities as tick-sheets sorted by the kind of day each one needs, the four-week rhythm, the age-and-skills chart, the safety checklist, rainy-day swap cards to cut out and a memory log for the season. Nothing here repeats the article — it is the working version you actually use.

The Four Kinds of Day

Before you pick an activity, work out which kind of day you are in. Almost every failed autumn plan comes from fitting a big-day activity into a small-day slot.

The day you have	Time it really takes	What fits
A free afternoon	1–2 hours, at home or nearby	Leaf play, a nature walk, a scavenger hunt, pumpkin decorating
A wet, stuck-inside day	2–3 hours, indoors	Pumpkin science, nature crafts, baking, a food board, reading
A dark evening	45–90 minutes after dinner	Campfire, moonlit walk, decorating the porch, a film and cocoa
A whole planned Saturday	Half a day or more	Apple picking, a farm visit, a corn maze, a cider mill, a canopy walk

The two-minute test: ask what has to be true for this to work — dry ground, daylight, a shop that is open, a child who is not already tired. If more than one is not true, pick from a different row.

Outdoor Afternoons

- Apple picking — go early in September, before the good varieties are picked out
- Leaf play — rake the pile onto grass, and check it with your hands before anyone jumps
- A nature walk with a collecting bag for leaves, twigs, acorns and pinecones
- A fall scavenger hunt — leaves, acorns, seed pods, animal tracks
- Decorating the porch and yard together
- A walk around the neighbourhood to look at the decorations
- A hike on a leaf-viewing trail
- A canopy walk, if there is one within driving distance

Pumpkin Science, Step by Step

1. Carve or hollow the pumpkin, keeping a wide opening at the top.
2. Set it on a tray with a lip, lined with a towel. Not optional — the foam is coloured.
3. Spoon 3–4 tbsp baking soda into the hollow and add a good squeeze of dish soap.
4. Mix 2 cups white vinegar with a few drops of food colouring in a jug.
5. Ask the child to predict what will happen, and write the prediction down.

6. Pour the vinegar in and stand back. The foam rises and spills for a minute or more.
7. Rinse the tray and repeat — the reaction runs four or five times.

Change one variable per run: warm vinegar, more soap, less baking soda, a narrower opening. That is the scientific method, and it is what makes this worth an hour.

Nature Crafts

- Nature wands — a straight stick, feathers, leaves and acorns bound with twine
- Rustic brooms — the same idea, longer, and good enough to hang by the door
- Wax-dipped leaves — press flat, dip in melted beeswax, dry on parchment
- A leaf garland or mobile — thread the waxed leaves onto twine or a hoop
- Decorated nature pumpkins — leaves, acorns and dried flowers glued on
- A scarecrow from old clothes stuffed with straw or leaves
- A pumpkin fairy home — hollowed out and dressed with moss, twigs and bark

Cozy Evenings

- A backyard campfire with blankets, hay bales and cocoa
- A moonlit walk around the block with torches and a thermos
- A Halloween food board the children arrange themselves
- Decorating the porch together
- A film and cocoa night — the reliable one
- Reading autumn books under a blanket
- Carving pumpkins by lamplight

The evening rule: start earlier than feels necessary. An activity that begins at 5:30 with a warm child is a success; the same activity at 7:00 with a tired one is a meltdown.

Outings Worth the Drive

Outing	Best for	Go when	Make it better
Apple picking	All ages	Early September	Take the wagon ride; buy more than you need
A farm visit	Under 8	A dry October weekend	Go in the morning when the animals are active
A corn maze	5 and up	Late afternoon or after dark	Photograph the map; agree a meeting point
A cider mill	All ages	Before noon	Pick one with a playground and animals
A canopy walk	6 and up	Peak colour, mid to late October	Check height restrictions before you drive
A pumpkin patch	All ages	Early to mid October	Choose a farm field, not a display

Rainy-Day Swaps

Cut these out and keep them in the wet-day box. When the rain starts, the decision is already made.

Instead of apple picking Bake with the apples you already have, or build a food board.

Instead of leaf play Wax the leaves you collected last week, or make a leaf garland.

Instead of a nature walk A scavenger hunt around the house, or a window bird watch.

Instead of a pumpkin patch Decorate the pumpkins you have with leaves, acorns and paint.

Instead of a campfire A film and cocoa night, or a board game by lamplight.

Instead of a corn maze An indoor obstacle course from cushions and blankets.

Age and Skills Chart

Age	What they can genuinely do	Best-fit activities
Under 2	Carry, touch, taste, watch	Leaf piles, a short walk in a carrier, sensory bins
2–4	Collect, sort, glue, stomp, pour with help	Scavenger hunts, nature crafts, pumpkin science, decorating
5–7	Follow multi-step instructions, use safe tools	Carving with supervision, corn mazes, baking, a scarecrow

Age	What they can genuinely do	Best-fit activities
8–11	Work independently, take on a real role	Cider mill trips, campfire cooking, a night walk
12+	Own the plan, invite a friend, lead a sibling	Hosting a party, a moonlit hike, a photoshoot, a big bake

Safety Checklist

- Check the leaf pile with your hands before anyone jumps — rakes, stones and sticks hide under leaves.
- Supervise all carving; children under eight draw the face while an adult cuts.
- Melt wax in a bowl over simmering water, never on a direct hob, and keep it out of reach while hot.
- Wash hands after handling pumpkins, gourds and outdoor produce, and after crafts with acorns or seeds.
- Check for toxic plants before a foraging walk — berries and some fungi are genuinely dangerous.
- Dress for the temperature, not the photograph: waterproof layers and gloves.
- Agree a meeting point before a maze, a farm or a crowded festival.
- Check local rules before any open fire, and never leave a fire unattended.

The choking risk is the one people miss. Acorns, conkers, dried corn kernels and small pinecones are all the right size to be a problem for a child under three. Do the crafts at the table with the small pieces in a bowl, and sweep the floor afterwards.

Four-Week Rhythm Planner

A rhythm works better than a plan, because it tells you what kind of thing to do without committing you to a specific day. Fill in the dates as you go.

Week	The shape of it	What we will do	Date
Week 1	One outdoor afternoon		
Week 2	One messy indoor session		
Week 3	One big outing		
Week 4	One quiet evening		
Buffer	Nothing at all — deliberately		

The buffer week is not laziness. It is the reason the other four weeks survive contact with real life. If it is still empty at the end of the month, that is a success.

The Three We Chose

Write your three activities for the season here and put this page on the fridge. Everything else on the list is a bonus.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Memory Log

One line per activity, written the same evening. This is the page you will still be reading in five years — the weather, the argument about gloves, the thing that made everyone laugh. Write it down before you forget it.

Date _____ What we did _____

Date _____ What we did _____

Date _____ **What we did** _____

Date _____ **What we did** _____

Date _____ **What we did** _____

Date _____ **What we did** _____

Date _____ **What we did** _____

Date _____ **What we did** _____

Date _____ **What we did** _____

Date _____ **What we did** _____

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