

5 Vertical Surface Activities for Christmas and Hanukkah!

by Lisa Marnell MBA, MS, OTR/L



Working on a vertical surface with kids is a wonderful way to improve several skills. Raising the arm, lowering the arm, and holding it steady all engage muscles of the shoulder and trunk. This helps to build a child's shoulder stability which is a necessary prerequisite for fine motor control. This is because doing precise and careful movements with the fingers means the shoulder must be held steady.

Another advantage of doing vertical surface activities at home or in the classroom at this time of year is that children are wired up and excited much of the time. This gives them a chance to move and self-regulate, while still focusing on a task and building skills. In this blog post I share my 5 favorite vertical surface activities for Christmas and Hanukkah.

1- Christmas Dots - On a Vertical Surface!

In this activity from "Busy Toddler", a child decorates a Christmas tree with stickers. Start with simply drawing a tree. Next, peeling the stickers is a wonderful fine motor activity that works on pincer grasp and bilateral (two-handed) coordination. Add a visual component by asking the child to match stickers on one side of the tree to stickers on the other side of the tree. Or add a planning and sequencing element by having kids follow a pattern for putting on the stickers: first red, then blue, then yellow, for example.



See this activity HERE: <https://busytoddler.com/2018/12/christmas-dot-sticker-trees/>

2- Star of David Decorating!

This next activity is from "Nuture Store" and has been modified to become a vertical surface activity. Tearing scraps of paper is an effective and motivating approach to work on fine motor skill and hand strength. For this activity print a Star of David and attach it to a vertical surface like a wall. Now, prepare one-inch strips of light blue, dark blue, and white construction paper. Have children tear the strips into tiny pieces and glue them onto the beautiful star!

Remember to always let children with tactile over-responsiveness be in charge of how much and how long they take part in a sticky or messy task that they find uncomfortable. Have paper towels on hand so they can take breaks, wipe off their fingers, enjoy a rest, and then participate again!



See the original activity HERE: <https://nurturerstore.co.uk/learning-about-hanukkah-unit-crafts-activities-printables>

3- Decorated Christmas Wreath!

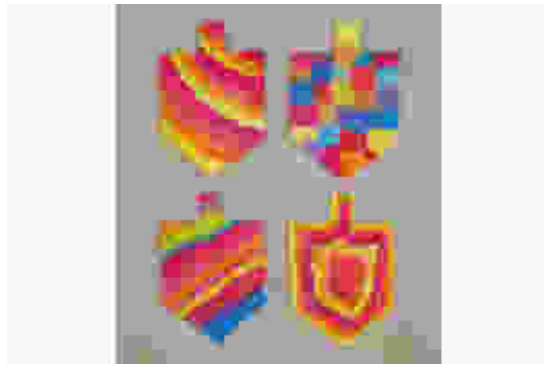
Adapted from an activity at "Chick Link", this version is creative and open-ended as children decorate a Christmas wreath with buttons, tinsel, cotton balls, and pompoms. Start by cutting a circle out of a paper plate. Next, add ribbon and tie it onto the wreath (children can cut measure and cut the ribbon!) Next, hang the wreath and have kids color it. They will need to hold it steady with one hand and color with the other hand. This is challenging and works on bilateral (two-handed) coordination. When done coloring, encourage children to decorate the wreath with all the different pieces!



See this activity HERE: <http://chicklink.com/advent-calendar-for-toddlers-christmaswinter-activities-for-2-3-year-olds/>

4- Dreidel Masterpieces!

With this fun Hanukkah activity children once again have an opportunity to express their creativity! And this artwork is as simple as it is gets. Simply print out some plain pictures of dreidels in black and white and attach them to a vertical surface. Now, instruct children to decorate the dreidels any way they want. You may choose to have them use markers or colored pencils. Another option is to have children paint their dreidels and then let them dry right on the wall.



See this activity HERE: <https://www.rd.com/advice/parenting/hanukkah-crafts-kids>

5- Holiday Colors Sticker Sort!

A final vertical surface activity suitable for either Christmas or Hanukkah is this Sticker Sort from "Busy Toddler". Children match the sticker color with the correct piece of construction paper fastened to a wall. They can work on colors, patterns, shapes, and even letters and numbers with this vertical surface activity.



See this activity HERE: <https://busytoddler.com/2017/02/sticker-sorting-activity/>

Feel welcome to leave a comment. What are your favorite go-to vertical surface activities? What tasks do your students or kids struggle with?

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