

# Planning for Learning through The twelve days of Christmas

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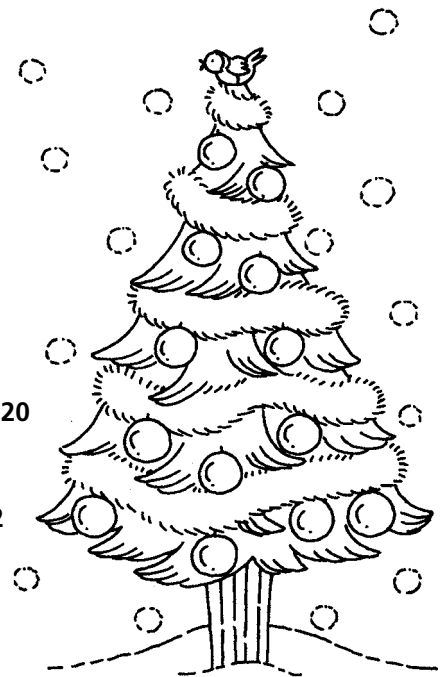
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Published by Practical Pre-School Books, A Division of MA Education Ltd,  
St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, Herne Hill, London, SE24 0PB Tel: 020 7738 5454  
[www.practicalpreschoolbooks.com](http://www.practicalpreschoolbooks.com)

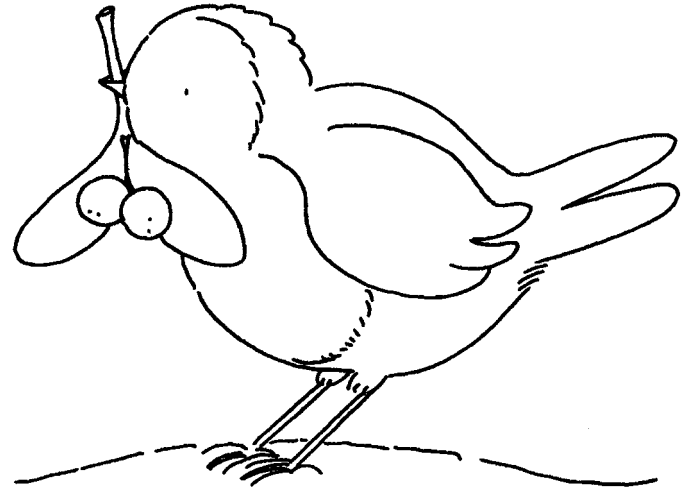
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First edition © Step Forward Publishing Limited 2001.

Front and back cover images taken by Lucie Carlier © MA Education Ltd.

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Planning for Learning through The twelve days of Christmas ISBN: 978-1-909280-43-4

# Making plans



## Child-friendly Planning

The purpose of planning is to make sure that all children enjoy a broad and balanced experience of learning. Planning should be flexible, useful and child-friendly. It should reflect opportunities available both indoors and outside. Plans form part of a planning cycle in which practitioners make observations, assess and plan.

Children benefit from reflective planning that takes into account the children's current interests and abilities and also allows them to take the next steps in their learning. Plans should make provision for activity that promotes learning and a desire to imagine, observe, communicate, experiment, investigate and create.

Plans should include a variety of types of activity. Some will be adult-initiated or adult-led, that focus on key skills or concepts. These should be balanced with opportunities for child-initiated activity where the children take a key role in the planning. In addition there is a need to plan for the on-going continuous provision areas such as construction, sand and water, malleable materials, small world, listening area, role-play and mark-making. Thought also needs to be given to the enhanced provision whereby an extra resource or change may enable further exploration, development and learning.

The outdoor environment provides valuable opportunities for children's learning. It is vital that plans value the use of outdoor space.

## The UK Frameworks

Within the UK a number of frameworks exist to outline the provision that children should be entitled to receive. Whilst a variety of terms and labels are used to describe the Areas of Learning there are key principles which are common to each document. For example they advocate that practitioners' planning should be personal based on observations and

knowledge of the specific children within a setting. They acknowledge that young children learn best when there is scope for child-initiated activity. In addition it is accepted that young children's learning is holistic. Although within the documents Areas of Learning are presented separately to ensure that key areas are not over-looked, within settings, children's learning will combine areas. Thus the Areas of Learning are perhaps of most use for planning, assessment and recording.

## Focused area plans

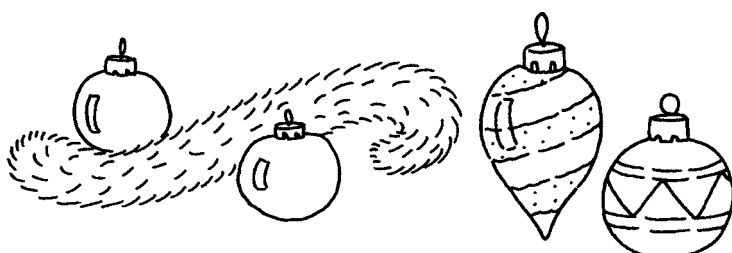
The plans you make for each day will outline areas of continuous provision and focused, adult-led activities. Plans for focused-area activities need to include aspects such as:

- resources needed;
- the way in which you might introduce activities;
- individual needs;
- the organisation of adult help;
- size of the group;
- timing;
- safety;
- key vocabulary.

Identify the learning and the Early Learning Goals that each activity is intended to promote. Make a note of any assessments or observations that you are likely to carry out. After carrying out the activities, make notes on your plans to say what was particularly successful, or any changes you would make another time.

## A final note

Planning should be seen as flexible. Not all groups meet every day, and not all children attend every day. Any part of the plan can be used independently, stretched over a longer period or condensed to meet the needs of any group. You will almost certainly adapt the activities as children



# Using the 'Early Learning Goals'

The principles that are common to each of the United Kingdom curriculum frameworks for the early years are described on page 2. It is vital that, when planning for children within a setting, practitioners are familiar with the relevant framework's content and organisation for areas of learning. Regardless however, of whether a child attends a setting in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales they have a right to provision for all areas of learning. The children should experience activities which encourage them to develop their communication and language; personal, social, emotional, physical, mathematical and creative skills. They should have opportunities within literacy and be encouraged to understand and explore their world.

Within the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012), Communication and Language; Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development are described as Prime Areas of Learning that are 'particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive' (page 4, DfE 2012). The Specific Areas of Learning are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

For each Area of Learning the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) describe what children are expected to be able to do by the time they enter Year 1. These goals, detailed on pages 4 to 6, have been used throughout this book to show how activities relating to Christmas could link to these expectations. For example, for Personal, Social and Emotional Development one aim relates to the development of children's 'self-confidence and self-awareness'. Activities suggested which provide the opportunity for children to do this have the reference PSE1. This will enable you to see which parts of the Early Learning Goals are covered for a given theme and to plan for areas to be revisited and developed.

In addition, an activity may be carried out to develop a range of different Early Learning Goals. For example, when playing a movement counting game as part of the Advent theme, the children will develop control and co-ordination which is part of PD1. In addition, they will count their movements, developing awareness of numbers. Thus, whilst adult-focused activities may have clearly defined goals at the planning stage, it must be remembered that as children take on ideas and initiate their own learning and activities, goals may change.

## The Prime Areas of Learning

### Communication and Language

**Listening and attention:** children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity. (CL1)

**Understanding:** children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events. (CL2)

**Speaking:** children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events. (CL3)

Christmas provides many opportunities for children to enjoy listening, understanding and speaking. When the children talk about Advent, favourite decorations, and times when they have received presents, they will talk about events in the past,



## Example chart to aid planning in the EYFS

Week beginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>FOCUSED ACTIVITIES</b>					
Focus Activity 1:					
Focus Activity 2:					
Stories and rhymes					
<b>CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Indoor)</b>					
Collage					
Construction (large)					
Construction (small)					
ICT					
Imaginative play					
Listening					
Malleable materials					
Mark making					
Painting					
Role play					
Sand (damp)					
Sand (dry)					
Water					
<b>CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Outdoor)</b>					
Construction					
Creative play					
Exploratory play					
Gross motor					
<b>ENHANCED PROVISION (Indoor)</b>					
<b>ENHANCED PROVISION (Outdoor)</b>					

# Days 5 and 6: The Christmas story

## Communication and Language

- Retell or read a simple version of the Christmas story. Discuss what it might have been like to be one of the people in the story (Joseph – anxious, shepherd – scared, angel – excited). (CL1)
- Using simple props encourage children to follow instructions to act the Christmas story. (CL2)

## Physical Development

- Play the shepherds and wolves game – see activity opposite. (PD1)
- Outside chalk stars, including one larger Christmas star. Use the stars as targets. Who can throw a bean bag into each star? Can anyone throw all their beanbags into the Christmas star? (PD1)

## Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Place Christmas crib figures in the sandtray for children to enjoy collaborative play. (PSE3)
- Talk about Joseph and Mary's arrival in Bethlehem. How would the children have made them feel welcome? How would they have celebrated Jesus' birth? (PSE3)

## Literacy

- Together read *Jesus' Christmas Party* by Nicholas Allan. Use it as the stimulus for role-play. (L1)
- On pieces of card write words that could be used to tell the Christmas story. Invite children to take it in turn to select a word, read it and put it in a 'Christmas story sentence'. (L1, 2)

## Mathematics

- On a piece of A4 paper provide children with pictures from the Christmas story to show numbers 1 to 10 (for example 1 star, 2 shepherds, 3 wise men, 4 cows...10 angels). The pictures should be coloured, cut out and then stuck on a strip of paper in number order. (M1)
- Use the following number rhyme. Encourage children to invent actions to depict the characters in the rhyme and to represent the number with their fingers. (M1)

*One star shining bright,  
Two travellers in the night.  
Three wise men from far away,  
Four donkeys munching hay.  
Five shepherds in a row,  
Six sheep as white as snow.  
Seven angels join to sing,  
Happy Birthday to our King.*



## Understanding the World

- The shepherds and wise men travelled a long way following the Christmas star. Invite the children to talk about long journeys they have made. These might include visits to relatives and friends, exciting days out or holiday trips. (UW1)
- Talk about the Christmas star. Use the internet to find pictures of stars. (UW3)
- Use the internet to see what Bethlehem looks like today. (UW3)

## Expressive Arts and Design

- Sing Christmas songs about the Christmas story. (EAD1)
- Cut out pictures from Christmas cards and glue them onto small paper bands, to make simple finger puppets. Use them to enact the Christmas story. (EAD2)
- Make Christmas cribs from cereal packets and scrap materials. (EAD2)
- Enjoy Christmas wool winding (see activity below). (EAD1)

## Activity: Christmas winding

**Learning opportunity:** Exploring and comparing materials.

**Early Learning Goal:** Expressive Arts and Design. Exploring and using media and materials.

**Resources:** Postcard sized pieces of black card, cut down the sides using pinking shears; wools, ribbons or raffia; sparkly threads – gold and silver wools with a lurex thread; tinsel; sparkly pipe cleaners, tape and scissors.

**Organisation:** Small group with adult supervision.

**Key vocabulary:** Green, red, white, gold, silver.

**What to do:** Talk to the children about the colours associated with Christmas – the greens of the Christmas trees or holly leaves, the reds of candles, holly berries or robins, the white of the winter snow, or the gold and silver of decorations.

Explain that they are going to make some wool windings to show these Christmas colours. Let each child choose their own colours.

Help them to start their windings by taping the end of chosen thread behind one end of their card. As they change colours, new threads can also be taped behind. Show the children how to start winding at one end of the card and gradually fill it as they work to the other end. As the children work talk about the choices they are making. What does this colour remind you of? Does this wool feel quite the same as that one? Which wool is softer? What does the ribbon feel like?

The finished windings, which will look like simple weaving, should have a variety of shades and textures. Once mounted (which hides the taped ends) they can be used as Christmas cards, or the basis of a calendar gift.

## Activity: Shepherds and wolves

**Learning opportunity:** Moving with increasing control.

**Early Learning Goal:** Physical Development.  
Moving and handling.

**Resources:** A large space.

**Organisation:** Whole group.

**Key vocabulary:** Wolf, sheep, shepherd, safe, danger.

**What to do:** Explain that the shepherds in the Nativity were on the hillside looking after their sheep. They needed to make sure that the sheep did not get lost. They also needed to guard them. There were wolves about!

This game is based on Grandmother's footsteps. You are the shepherd. The children are the hungry wolves, trying to creep up silently to steal the sheep.

The wolves start at one end of the hall, and you stand at the other with your back to them. Slowly the wolves approach, chanting a rhyme, and stepping in time to the rhythm of the words: 'We are hungry wolves that creep, Looking for a tasty sheep.'

The wolves must watch you carefully because at any time you may turn around. Any wolves seen moving must go back to the beginning. Once a wolf reaches you, use suitably fearsome noises to send the delighted wolves scurrying back to the beginning.

## Display

Display the wool winding on a board covered with black paper. Encourage children to compare the colours and to identify a 'winding' from a description. Put out the cribs to form a street. Encourage the children to enjoy playing in the 'Bethlehem street'. Where would Joseph like to have stayed?

