GENERAL

going on a bear hunt preschool activities

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Imagine a world where the forest is alive, the wind carries the scent of pine, and a brave little explorer is ready to face the unknown. The classic children's story, *Going on a Bear Hunt*, offers a timeless adventure that can be transformed into a series of engaging preschool activities. By weaving the narrative into hands on play, arts and crafts, movement, and sensory exploration, teachers and parents can create a learning environment that nurtures creativity, cooperation, and confidence.

Why the Bear Hunt Theme Works for Preschoolers

Preschoolers are naturally curious. They love stories that let them step into a role—whether it's a hero, a scientist, or a curious child. The bear hunt story provides a simple yet powerful structure: a journey through different environments that each present a challenge. This framework allows children to:

- Develop storytelling skills by predicting what comes next and retelling the adventure in their own words.
- Practice problem solving as they decide how to overcome obstacles like rain, a river, or a thunderstorm.
- Build social skills through cooperative play and sharing ideas about how to navigate the journey.
- Enhance physical coordination with movement activities that mimic walking through mud, jumping over logs, or swimming across a "river."
- Engage the senses by using textures, sounds, and smells that mirror the story's settings.

Setting the Stage: Preparing the Classroom

Before launching into activities, create an environment that feels like the forest. Use green and brown drapes, tree cut outs, and natural materials such as pinecones, leaves, and twigs. A simple "forest" backdrop can transform a regular classroom into an imaginative playground. Here's a quick checklist to ensure your space is ready:

1. Arrange a "path" using a long rug or tape that leads to different activity stations.
2. Label each station with a simple picture that represents the part of the journey (e.g., a raindrop for the rain, a wave for the river).
3. Set up a story corner with a big picture book of Going on a Bear Hunt and a comfortable seating area.
4. Prepare a materials table with craft supplies, sensory bins, and movement props.
5. Ensure safety by securing any loose objects and checking that all activity areas are free from hazards.

Story Time: Reading and Retelling

Begin the day with a group read aloud of the story. Use expressive voice and gestures to bring the characters to life. After reading, guide the children through a discussion that encourages them to think about the journey's stages. Ask open ended questions such as:

- What do you think will happen next?
- How would you feel if you were the child going on the hunt?
- What would you do if you found a bear in the woods?

Encourage each child to share their thoughts, fostering confidence and active listening. This initial engagement sets the tone for the rest of the day's activities.

Activity 1: Sensory Forest Exploration

Turn the classroom into a multi sensory forest. Create a **sensory bin** filled with materials that mimic the story's settings. For example:

- Rain: Use blue water beads or a small sprayer with a wet cloth.
- River: Add a shallow tub with blue plastic fish and a small boat.
- Mud: Mix sand with a little water and a touch of soil.
- Wind: Hang a small fan or use a wind chime for sound.

Invite children to explore each element with their hands and senses. Encourage them to describe the textures, sounds, and smells. This activity supports sensory integration and language development.

Activity 2: Bear Hunt Movement Circuit

Design a movement circuit that mirrors the story's progression. Use simple props to represent obstacles:

- Rain – Children hop over a "rain" area marked with blue tape.
- River – They step over a "river" made of blue mats.
- Thunderstorm – A quick dash through a tunnel or a shadow box.
- Bear Encounter – A gentle "hide and seek" game where kids pretend to be the bear.

Rotate children through the stations, encouraging them to use different muscles and coordination skills. This movement circuit promotes gross motor development and keeps the energy high.

Activity 3: Crafting the Bear's Trail

Let the children create their own "bear trail" using art supplies. Provide the following materials:

- Construction paper in green, blue, brown, and grey.
- Glue sticks, scissors, and safety knives.
- Stickers of leaves, animals, and rain drops.
- Natural materials like pinecones, leaves, and twigs.

Guide them to cut out shapes that represent the forest, water, and obstacles. Encourage them to arrange these shapes on a large sheet of paper, creating a visual map of the journey. This craft activity enhances fine motor skills and allows children to visually interpret the story.

Activity 4: Role Play and Drama

Set up a simple drama area where children can act out the story. Provide costumes such as:

- Bear ears or a plush bear.
- Rain ponchos and umbrellas.
- Boots for stepping over "mud."
- Water bottles or plastic cups for the river.

Facilitate a guided role play session. Start with the child's journey, letting them decide how to navigate each challenge. Encourage other children to join as friends, a guide, or even the bear. This activity boosts imagination, social interaction, and confidence in speaking.

Activity 5: Music and Rhythm – "The Bear Hunt Song"

Music is a powerful tool for learning. Create a simple song that follows the bear hunt story's rhythm. Use repetitive phrases and actions:

- "We're going on a bear hunt, we're going to the woods."
- "We'll walk, we'll hop, we'll run, we'll play."
- Use clapping or percussion to mimic the steps.

Incorporate instruments like tambourines, maracas, or simple drums. Encourage children to move along with the rhythm, reinforcing the story's sequence while developing auditory discrimination and coordination.

Activity 6: Story Sequencing Cards

After the day's adventures, give each child a set of picture cards that depict key moments from the story. Ask them to arrange the cards in the correct order. This exercise strengthens cognitive skills such as sequencing, memory, and logical reasoning. For added challenge, have children explain why they placed each card where they did.

Activity 7: Nature Walk and Observation

Take the bear hunt theme outdoors. If your school has a garden or nearby park, lead a guided nature walk. Encourage children to:

- Observe leaves, bark, and insects.
- Collect small natural items like acorns or feathers.
- Listen to bird songs and the rustle of leaves.

After the walk, return to the classroom and share observations. Use a large poster to map the route and mark the places they visited, tying it back to the story's settings.

Activity 8: Sensory Bear Hunt Storybook

Create a collaborative storybook. Provide blank pages and let each child draw or paste an illustration of a part of the journey. Add simple captions or words that describe each scene. Once completed, bind the pages into a book that the class can read together. This activity promotes literacy, collaboration, and a sense of ownership over the learning process.

Activity 9: Problem Solving Puzzles

Introduce puzzles that align with the bear hunt narrative. For example, a puzzle of a river that children must assemble to "cross" it, or a maze that leads to the bear's den. These puzzles develop spatial awareness and critical thinking. Offer support by asking guiding questions like, "Which piece fits here?" or "What's the best way to get across?"

Activity 10: Calm Down Bear Corner

After all the excitement, set up a calm down corner where children can relax. Include soft pillows, a plush bear, and a small fan to simulate wind. Provide a few calming activities such as coloring sheets with forest themes, simple breathing exercises ("big bear breath"), or a short guided meditation that imagines resting in the woods. This helps children transition from high energy to a calm state, supporting emotional regulation.

Integrating Learning Goals

Each of these activities supports key developmental milestones for preschoolers:

- Cognitive Development: Sequencing, problem solving, memory, and language skills.
- Social-Emotional Development: Cooperation, empathy, self regulation, and confidence.
- Physical Development: Gross and fine motor skills, balance, and coordination.
- Creative Development: Imagination, artistic expression, and musicality.

By aligning activities with these goals, teachers can create a holistic learning experience that feels like an adventure rather than a lesson.

Parent Involvement: Take the Bear Hunt Home

Encourage parents to extend the bear hunt theme at home. Provide a simple activity sheet that includes:

- A printable story map.
- A list of sensory materials to gather (leaves, water, sand).
- Ideas for a family storytime or a backyard “river” walk.
- Tips for discussing feelings and problem solving during the hunt.

When children share their experiences with parents, it reinforces learning and strengthens the home school connection.

Safety Tips for Bear Hunt Activities

While the bear hunt is a fun theme, safety should always be a priority. Keep these reminders in mind:

- Supervise all movement and role play sessions closely.
- Use non sharp tools and supervise cutting activities.
- Ensure all props are age appropriate and free from small parts that could be swallowed.
- Check for allergies before using natural materials like pinecones or leaves.
- Provide a first aid kit for any minor scrapes or bumps.

Conclusion: The Lasting Impact of a Bear Hunt Adventure

Incorporating a beloved story like *Going on a Bear Hunt*into preschool activities offers more than just a fun day in the classroom. It becomes a catalyst for learning across multiple domains—cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and creative. By turning the narrative into sensory play, movement circuits, crafts, drama, and music, educators create a rich tapestry of experiences that resonate with young minds.

These activities not only keep children engaged but also help

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