

Cookie-Cutter Fun



M04 Tasting and Preparing Food

Primary Objective: 21
Explores and describes spatial relationships and shapes
b. Understands shapes

Related Objectives: 1b, 7a, 8b, 9b, 11a, 13

What You Do

Background: As children experiment with using cookie cutters on gelatin, not only do they develop an awareness of geometric shapes in their environment, but they also get to explore how gelatin shapes wiggle, jiggle, and taste! While young infants should not eat gelatin, they can participate by exploring plastic cookie cutters and plush shape toys.

Materials: 9 x 13-inch cake pan; mixing bowl; spoon; electric kettle or sauce pan and stove; refrigerator; a variety of biscuit or cookie cutters in basic geometric shapes; shapes cut out of paper, felt, or card stock; plates; plush shape toys

Ingredients: twelve-ounce can of frozen juice concentrate (e.g., orange, grape, apple); three envelopes of unflavored gelatin; 1½ cups (1 juice can) water for boiling; vegetable oil to grease pan; food coloring (optional)

Directions: Prepare the gelatin in advance, away from the children. Empty the envelopes of gelatin into a mixing bowl. Add a bit of the thawed fruit juice concentrate to soften the gelatin. Gradually add boiling water and the rest of the fruit juice to the gelatin, stirring until the gelatin is fully dissolved. Add food coloring, if using. Pour the mixture into a lightly greased 9 x 13-inch cake pan. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours or until firm. Consider making a double batch of the gelatin in two cake pans to allow more children to enjoy the experience.

1. Invite a group of children to wash their hands prior to joining you at the table with the gelatin and materials.

“We should wash our hands before we start this experience with gelatin. It’s important to have clean hands when we work with food.”

2. Encourage the children to explore the collection of cookie cutters. Demonstrate how to evenly press on the cookie cutters. Introduce the pan of prepared gelatin. Give each child one plate.

“Here are some cookie cutters. They are used to cut out shapes. Today, we will use them to cut shapes out of gelatin. To use the cookie cutter, you press it down, like this. See how I use my hand to make sure the cutter is flat? o you want to try?”

3. Invite the children to experiment with cutting shapes out of the gelatin and putting the shapes on their plates. As children explore, talk about the shapes they create with the cookie cutters by referring to the shape cutouts. Allow children to touch, taste, and eat the gelatin shapes.

“I see a circle on your plate! You cut out a circle. It looks like this paper circle. What does your circle taste like?”

4. Look for signs that the children are overstimulated or no longer interested in this activity.

“Talin, you have pushed your plate away. I think you might be finished I wonder whether you would like to join Kenny. He’s reading stories to the baby dolls.”

Including All Children

- Pair children of different motor-skill levels. One child can push the cookie cutter onto the gelatin, and the other child can pop the gelatin onto the plate.
- Provide cookie cutters of various sizes. If possible, use silicone or rubber-edged cutters, which are gentler on children’s hands and can be grasped and manipulated more easily.
- Place a nonslip surface under the pan of gelatin.
- Watch for nonverbal cues that signal a desire to participate, such as gestures, body movements, and facial expressions.**
- Name a few of the shapes in the child’s home language.**

Teaching Sequence

RED	Hold the child in your lap and offer her a shape toy or plastic cookie cutter with smooth edges. Talk about the shape as she holds it. “That’s a circle you’re touching. It is round and soft.”
ORANGE	As the child holds a gelatin shape, point out nearby objects in the environment that have the same shape. Notice aloud the similarities you see between the shape he is holding and an object in the room. “Ben, your gelatin shape is a square, just like that picture frame. The circle on my plate is round like a ball.”
ORANGE	Offer two different shapes cut out of paper, felt, or card stock. Invite the child to match the gelatin shape to the paper cutout of the same shape. “Josh, can you find the aper shape that looks like the shape you cut out of the gelatin?”
YELLOW	
YELLOW	Name one basic shape and invite the child to identify the corresponding gelatin shape on her plate. “Nabila, you cut out three shapes. Can you find the quare gelatin shape on your plate?”
GREEN	
GREEN	Encourage the child to name a few basic shapes as he cuts out gelatin shapes. “Waylon, can you tell me the name of this shape I have on my plate? You’re right. It’s a square. What is the name of that shape you have on your plate? You’re right! It’s a triangle!” Encourage the child to identify matching shapes in the environment. “Do you see any triangles in the room that look like your shape?”

See *The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, Volume 3: Objectives for Development & Learning* for the progression of development beyond the green colored band for this objective and dimension.

Questions to Guide Your Observations

- Did the child show an awareness of different shapes as she cut shapes out of the gelatin? If so, how? (21b)
- How did the child grasp and manipulate the felt, paper or gelatin shapes? (7a)
- In what ways did the child attend to and engage in cutting out and naming the gelatin shapes? (11a)

Additional Ideas

- Work closely with families to ensure that the gelatin or fruit juices do not pose an allergy risk. If necessary, use vegan gelatin or avoid citrus juices, which may cause reactions in very young children. Apple and grape juice are good substitutes for citrus juice.
- If the sugar content of fruit juice is a concern, substitute water for the fruit juice.
- Consider nonstandard shape cutters, such as plastic drinking cups, stacking cups (often available in geometric shapes), or small plastic jars.
- If children want to continue cutting shapes with the cookie cutters, offer slices of bread for making shape toast or sandwiches, or encourage toddlers and twos to cut shapes out of molding dough.

Related LearningGames®

- 87. Choosing and Stringing

Objective 5

Demonstrates balancing skills

Related Objectives: 2a, 6, 7a, 8a, 8b, 11a, 11c, 14a, 25

What You Do

1. Scatter several objects on the floor, e.g., a soft ball or stuffed toy. Recite the rhyme and demonstrate the movements.

Hungry crane, what do you see?

[Make “binoculars” with your hands.]

I see a tasty fish! *[Point to an object on the floor.]*

Go ahead and pick it up *[Crouch to pick up the object.]*

And eat it as you wish. *[Return to standing.]*

2. Repeat the rhyme using different animal/treat combinations. Demonstrate the movements and invite toddlers and 2-year-olds to copy them.

- Invite toddlers and 2-year-olds to suggest different animal/treat combinations. Repeat the rhyme using their ideas as you demonstrate the movements and encourage the child to copy them.
- For infants, hold the child in front of you facing outward, supporting his body as needed. Place a small object in front of him. Guide his hand to reach out for and grasp the object as you recite the rhyme.

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