



# The Invest in Kids™ March Break Activity Guide



## Tossed Salad

Cooking with your child encourages exploring the colours, textures and flavours of food as you prepare a meal or snack. Making a simple salad is a great way to spend some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** together!

### You will need:

- Salad greens (explore different kinds of lettuce like iceberg, Romaine or red leaf, or try using spinach)
- A variety of veggies like carrots, red onions, sliced mushrooms, cucumber, alfalfa sprouts, grape tomatoes
- Vegetable oil
- Vinegar
- Fresh or dried herbs, salt and pepper
- Big bowl
- Salad tongs

### Instructions:

- Involve your child in ripping and washing the salad greens, while a grown-up peels and chops other vegetables, as required.
- Enjoy tasting the different vegetables and describing them. Which is your child's favourite?
- Place all of the salad ingredients in a bowl. Drizzle them with oil and vinegar. Your child can sprinkle on the herbs, salt and pepper and then help with tossing and serving the salad.

### Enjoy this more with Comfort, Play & Teach™:



**Comfort:** Let your child know what an excellent cook he is. Provide lots of praise and encouragement to help build his confidence in his abilities.



**Play:** Enjoy a guessing game while you prepare the salad. Tell your child you are thinking of an ingredient that is orange and crunchy or one that is long and green.



**Teach:** Experiment with different ingredients. How does the salad taste if you add cheese, chick peas, apple chunks or sunflower seeds? Does your child prefer raspberry vinegar or Balsamic? How do dried herbs taste compared to fresh?

## Festive Foods Collage

Creative art provides a wonderful opportunity for your child to role play activities he sees other family members doing, such as cooking. To enjoy some **Comfort, Play & Teach**™ time together, join him in making a special meal from pictures, glitter and other collage materials!

### You will need:

- Old cooking magazines or grocery store flyers
- Children's scissors
- Paper plates
- White glue and (should it be or) glue stick
- Powdered paint or food colouring (optional)
- Glitter

### Instructions:

- As your child cuts out pictures, talk about the different foods. Are there pictures of meat, fruits and vegetables, grains and dairy products? Talk about what interests him about the pictures and why he wants them as part of his meal.
- Encourage your child to glue different pictures onto paper plates, creating his own special meal. Add a little paint or food colouring to the white glue so your child can pretend it is mustard, ketchup or gravy! Glitter can be salt, pepper and spices!
- Later, these creations can become part of his dramatic play when he serves a meal to his stuffed toys.

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach**™:



**Comfort:** Show interest in what your child is creating. As you make comments and ask questions she will feel proud of her creation and be encouraged to continue with the activity.



**Play:** Invite one or two of your child's friends to participate in the activity. The children can practice important social skills as they work together. They can pretend they are running a restaurant and serve each other the meals they created!



**Teach:** Ask your child to think of other materials she could use to create a collage (e.g., pieces of fabric, buttons, crumpled tissue). This will develop her problem-solving skills and help her to think creatively.

## Teddy Bear Picnic

Enjoying a picnic with teddy bears and dolls is a lovely way for toddlers and preschoolers to practice a variety of important social skills while engaging in imaginative play. A few simple props will turn a typical play experience into a **Comfort, Play & Teach™** afternoon of fun feasting with pretend friends!

### You will need:

- Dolls and teddy bears
- A blanket
- Paper cups and plates and plastic cutlery
- Playdough

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



#### Comfort:

Through pretend play, toddlers and preschoolers can practice social skills like caring for someone else's needs, sharing, saying 'please' and 'thank you'. Comment on the way children play with their toys and let them know when they are being gentle and polite.



#### Play:

Providing props will encourage children to explore familiar objects and to learn how to use them with others. Children can distribute dishes, pour tea and eat pretend cookies with their dolls. Pretend play allows young children to recreate experiences that they have enjoyed with parents and grown-ups!



#### Teach:

Playing with teddy bears and dolls encourages toddlers and preschoolers to use their developing language skills. The pretend play situation will prompt him to talk to toys while serving them tea. Join in the play and ask open-ended questions so that children will talk to you as well!

## Book Talk

Looking at picture books creates an opportunity to tell stories, to share ideas and opinions and to practice speaking and listening. Remember that reading provides **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time for you to share and enjoy books with your infant, toddler or preschooler at bedtime, during playtime....any time!

### You will need:

- Books that interest your child - explore different kinds like board books, cloth books, bath books, pop-ups and picture books!
- A book you've made yourself using a small photo album and pictures of family members and familiar things.

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



#### Comfort:

Reading with your child is a simple way to build his language skills and to show him you are interested in talking and learning more about what he thinks and knows. Create a daily reading routine where you can cuddle up together and enjoy a favourite book.



#### Play:

Choose a storybook that you and your child have read together many times. Encourage her to hold the book, turn the pages and tell you about the pictures! Together you can point to and label familiar things. Older children can even make up their own story to tell you!



#### Teach:

Provide books for your child at different times of the day. Select vinyl books for bath time. Add board books to your child's play materials so he can pretend to read to his teddy bear. Sing a lullaby book together at bedtime. Your child will discover that reading can happen during different routines!

## Seriously Silly Stories

Age Range: 3 - 5 years

Children's vocabulary develops very rapidly during the preschool years. Making up stories is a great way for them to use their wonderful words and express their ideas. Familiar objects can be transformed into story characters, and imaginary places can be visited, as you and your child enjoy some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time together!

### You will need:

- An assortment of objects from around the house (i.e., a spoon, a mitten, a comb, an apple, a bracelet)
- A cloth bag

### Instructions:

Place the items into the bag, and allow your child to reach in and guess what each one is by how it feels. Encourage her to select something, and then make up a story, using one object at a time. If she is not sure how to start, begin with a sentence like, *"Once upon a time there was a magic bracelet named Princess Periwinkle, and she travelled all over the world in search of a..."* Your child can select the next item and continue with the story, adding more ideas until the story is complete.

### Enjoy this more with Comfort, Play & Teach™:



**Comfort:** Make a habit not just of reading, but of telling stories to your child. There are many short and repetitive stories that are easy to learn and that your child will love to hear you tell again and again. As she learns the stories, she will join in, filling in missing words, eventually proudly telling the whole story to you!



**Play:** Using a 'feely bag' adds mystery to storytelling and is a way to help your child to use senses other than sight. This not only sharpens a child's imagination, as she tries to picture what each object is, but it also teaches empathy for those who are visually challenged.



**Teach:** Activities like this help children to understand that stories have a beginning, middle and end; characters do and say different things; and that some important event happens. Storytelling is a vital part of literacy development and encourages reading later on.

## Rhyming Role Play

Reciting and singing simple nursery rhymes like *Bell Horses* is a great way for children to develop their language skills. Here is a simple **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity that will have children moving creatively as they say their favourite rhymes!

Bell horses, bell horses  
What's the time of day?  
One o'clock, two o'clock  
Time to go away!

### Instructions:

- Recite the rhyme a few times and invite him to say the words with you.
- As you say the rhyme, pat the beat on your lap. Your child can join you in doing this or tap the beat with a simple instrument such as jingle bells.
- Encourage your child to gallop like a horse as you say the rhyme together.

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



**Comfort:** Children enjoy hearing familiar rhymes repeated again and again. They develop pride in their growing language skills when they recite the rhymes too!



**Play:** Creative thinking and imagination are supported when children have the opportunity to pretend and role play.



**Teach:** Nursery rhymes help children learn to hear rhythm patterns in language and the musical quality of words.

## Instant Orchestra

Age Range: All Ages

You can make musical instruments out of recyclables and items from around the house! Children can explore different sounds and "play along" to their favourite songs and rhymes as they discover different uses for familiar items. Making music a daily part of your child's life is a great way to spend **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time together!

### Safety Precautions for Infants and Toddlers

Ensure that the lids of containers like bottles and used, washed vitamin containers are glued on tightly so that the contents remain inside. Wooden spoons should be cut shorter for little hands, and sanded smooth to protect your child's eyes and mouth. When an instrument wears out or breaks, discard it and make a new one. **Always put safety first!**

### You will need:

- A plastic bottle filled with some water
- Used washed vitamin pill containers partly filled with different things (i.e. rice, popping corn, salt)
- An ice cream container and two wooden spoons
- Two aluminum pie pans
- Two smooth stones (for tapping together). Caution Note: These should be large enough that a baby cannot put the entire stone in his or her mouth.
- Two empty paper towel rolls (for tapping together or to sing/speak into)
- Fingers for snapping, hands for clapping, thighs for patting, feet for tapping
- Voices for singing, rhyming, chanting, humming, whispering...

### Enjoy this more with Comfort, Play & Teach™:



**Comfort:** Children enjoy hearing and singing familiar songs again and again. Younger children are soothed by the sound of their parents' voices. The mastery that older children gain from repeating tunes like 'Twinkle Twinkle' or rhymes like 'One, Two, Buckle my Shoe' builds their confidence in their abilities.



**Play:** As children listen to music, sing or recite rhymes, they can practice motor skills required for grasping and manipulating instruments. They discover that they can create sounds with various things, and even use their own voices and bodies for music.



making. Parents can encourage these kinds of explorations by making instruments with their children, sharing the songs of their childhood and creating music together!



**Teach:** Children learn so much by making music - from comparing sounds, to remembering the words to songs, sometimes even making up their own! They begin to feel the beat and to make connections between the rhythm of language and of music. By playing the instruments loudly then softly, quickly then slowly, they learn some basic music concepts through natural exploration.

## Mystery Box Fingerplay

Age Range: All Ages

Fingerplays are an excellent way to **Comfort, Play** with and **Teach** your child. They enrich children's vocabulary, expose them to different sounds, and are a wonderful way for grown-ups and children to laugh together and interact. The following rhyme can be adapted for infants, toddlers or preschoolers:

*Here is a box, open the lid  
I wonder whatever inside is hid? (make an animal sound)  
Why, it's a (name the animal)  
Without a doubt  
Open the lid and let him come out!*

For **infants**, make a fist and pretend it is a box, holding your other hand over it like a lid. Make the animal sound (i.e., cat, frog, chicken), and then lift the 'lid' and pretend to peek inside the 'box'. Reveal the name of the animal and then tickle your baby while making the animal sound some more.

For **toddlers**, you can do the fingerplay as for infants, or you can put some finger puppets into a small box, to make them curious. Say the rhyme, and make the animal sound, giving your child the opportunity to guess what it is before sharing the answer. If your child does not know the answer, they soon will with enough repetitions of the rhyme. Then put the puppet on your finger and give your toddler finger puppet kisses!

For **preschoolers**, do the same as for toddlers. To extend the activity, leave the last word off the end of each line and encourage your child to fill in the blanks. This will help to increase their attention and memory. Soon they will be reciting the rhyme all by themselves!

**Enjoy this more with Comfort, Play & Teach™:**



**Comfort:** Fingerplays invite grown-ups and children to interact, tickle each other, make silly sounds and giggle. They are a very fun way to play together and to show affection!



**Play:** With or without finger puppets, this activity encourages children to use their imaginations, and allows them to learn new words, to practice their fine motor skills and explore animal sounds.



**Teach:** As children learn the words to the rhyme, they also learn to identify different kinds of animals by their sounds and to label them. Fingerplays support children's emerging literacy skills.

## Sleeping Bunnies

Age Range: 19 months to 5 years

This is a traditional game that toddlers and preschoolers will love to play again and again. As you sing the song, they will pretend to be baby rabbits sleeping and then jump around actively when they “wake up”. Let this activity be part of the **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time you spend together!

*See the little bunnies, sleeping until noon.*

*Can we wake them with a merry tune?*

*Oh, so still.... Are they ill?*

*Wake up sleeping bunnies, hop, hop, hop!*

*Wake up sleeping bunnies, hop, hop, hop!*

*Wake up sleeping bunnies, hop and stop!*

Ask the children to lie down on the floor in their own space, pretending to sleep. Sing the Sleeping Bunnies song. When you sing “Wake up sleeping bunnies, hop, hop, hop!” the children should move into a standing position and jump up and down until you say the word “stop”. Jump with them to encourage their participation. Once the children have heard this song a few times, they will quickly go into the role of bunny rabbits and anticipate the upcoming jumping!

**Enjoy this more with Comfort, Play & Teach™:**



**Comfort:** A game like this gives children an opportunity to participate in a group activity and to laugh and play together. It enables them to develop positive social skills and feel a sense of belonging.



**Play:** Pretending to be animals is an excellent way for children to stretch their imaginations and move their bodies in different ways. It also helps them to represent their knowledge about animals through creative movement.



**Teach:** Substitute different animals for bunnies, encouraging them to stomp like elephants, slither like snakes, gallop like horses or float like butterflies. Use musical instruments to suggest the different actions (i.e., drum for stomping elephant, maraca for slithering snake, tone block for galloping horse and finger cymbals for butterfly). Ask children for their own ideas!

## Ice Cube Painting

Have you ever tried painting a picture using tinted ice cubes? This is a simple art activity that will encourage your child's creativity while you enjoy some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time together!

### You will need:

- Ice cube tray
- Water
- Food colouring or powdered paint
- Paper
- Tray
- Smock to protect your child's clothes

### Instructions:

- Place a sheet of paper onto a tray.
- If using ice cubes tinted with food colouring, place one or two onto the paper. Your child can grasp each ice cube and slide them around on the paper, creating patterns as the ice melts.
- If using clear ice cubes and powdered paint, sprinkle two different colours of paint onto the paper so your child can observe what happens as the colours combine.
- For variety, add fresh herbs to the water before making ice cubes. This will allow your child to use his sense of smell while painting.
- Comment on the way your child is painting (e.g., "Look at how you are making circles with the ice cubes!") or on the pattern he has created (e.g. "Your picture reminds me of falling snow!").

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



**Comfort:** Let your child know that you admire the artwork she has created. Knowing that you appreciate her efforts will build her self esteem and encourage her to explore her creativity even further.



**Play:** Making paintings using ice cubes helps your child to think about creative ways to make designs. What else can you experiment with? Try painting with feathers, pine cones, cotton swabs, crumpled tinfoil or other unusual items.



**Teach:** Painting with ice cubes introduces science concepts like freezing, melting and colour combining in a way that is simple and fun.

## Egg Carton Garden

You don't need a backyard to explore planting with your child! Simple tools such as seeds, soil, a spoon and an egg carton lid are all you need to make a little garden grow. Here is a simple **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity to help your child's love of gardening start to blossom!

### You will need:

- Egg carton lid
- Potting soil
- Bowl
- Spoon
- Chive seeds (or other herbs)
- Water

### Instructions:

- Pour some potting soil into a bowl and use a spoon to fill the lid of the egg carton with soil.
- Sprinkle seeds onto the soil and gently press them in using a finger.
- Add a little water to moisten the soil (and do this daily to encourage the growth of the herbs).
- Once the herbs have grown, enjoy them in a salad or on an omelet!

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



**Comfort:** Planting seeds and tending to them lets your child care for a living thing. Watering the seeds each day will help your child to develop a sense of responsibility and give him a sense of accomplishment.



**Play:** Examining the seeds, soil and water allows your child to make discoveries using her senses. She will learn about plants through watching, touching and smelling. Eventually she will be able to taste the herbs as well!



**Teach:** Planting seeds encourages your child to learn about the sequence of plant growth. He can see how a seed becomes a plant over time, learn about how plants need water and light, and even chart how many days it takes for shoots to appear.

## Seed Shakers

How many different seeds can you find in your pantry? Dried beans, popping corn and even tiny mustard seeds can be used to make simple shakers. Here is a simple **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity that will help your child explore seeds and sounds all at the same time!

### You will need:

- Clear plastic “child-proof” bottles
- Assorted seeds (e.g., sunflower, pumpkin, dried fava beans, corn kernels, caraway seeds)

### Instructions:

- Fill each plastic bottle part way with a different seed. Ensure that the lids are securely on the containers.
- Talk about the different seeds. What kind are they? Where do they come from? How do they help new plants grow?
- If you have a seed catalogue or a grocery store flyer, try to show your child a picture of the plants that produce each seed.
- Play a recording of your child’s favourite music and encourage him to shake each bottle and explore the sounds that each different seed makes.

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



**Comfort:** Encourage your child’s curiosity about the shakers. If he points to a bottle, label the seeds inside for him. Clap along as he shakes a bottle and tell him what beautiful music he is making. Your child will love all the special attention you show him and know that you are interested in what he is learning!



**Play:** Using the containers for shaking and making music will help your child to think creatively. She will discover that she can explore the seeds using not just her eyes but also her ears. Make up a silly song together about seeds and plants!



**Teach:** Older children will be very curious about the names of the different seeds. Print the names of each seed on sticky labels and place these on the containers to encourage your child’s interest in letters and words.

# Collection Collage

Age Range: 3 - 5 years

Preschoolers often collect small items like pine cones, twigs, pebbles, shells and seeds. The next time you are out walking together, encourage your child's curiosity. Creating a collage from the found items will allow your child to preserve and display their collection. It is an activity that provides some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time.

## You will need:

- Collected items (feathers, seeds, pebbles, twigs, etc.)
- The lid from an egg carton or a thick piece of cardboard
- Equal parts of flour and salt
- Water to mix

## Instructions:

- Combine flour and salt and add enough water to make thick collage dough.
- Spread the dough into the egg carton lid and then press the collected items into it, arranging them as desired.
- Once complete, allow the dough to harden. The result will be a beautiful work of art made from nature items!

## Enjoy this more with Comfort, Play & Teach™:



**Comfort:** Enjoy walking outside and noticing nature. Pay attention to the colours, shapes, sizes and kinds of things you see and collect. Collecting items provides a wonderful opportunity to spend time together and share your thoughts and observations. What do you like to collect?



**Play:** Play an I Spy game while looking for things. What things can you find that are green? Smooth? Come from trees? Once you have collected enough things, have your child look at a small grouping and then cover their eyes while you hide something. See if they can guess what's missing!



**Teach:** Collecting items for making a collage is an excellent way for your child to learn many concepts such as colour, shape, size, texture. Ask your child to identify items that are round, brown, rough, small or shiny. See if they use the things they found to create patterns in the dough.



## Sorting Nature Items

Exploring items found in nature will build your child's interest in the world around her and help her to learn many new words to describe what she has collected. Here is a simple **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity that will be lots of fun for little scientists!

### You will need:

- A collection of nature items like shells, feathers, acorns, flowers, leaves, rocks, twigs and pine cones. Include small and large items, things that are the same colour, things that represent plants, animals and the earth
- Containers for sorting (e.g., paper plates or aluminum pie pans)
- Magnifying glass

### Instructions:

- Encourage your child to gently touch the nature items and look closely at them using a magnifying glass.
- Describe each item and where it comes from. Is it part of a plant or tree? Does it come from the earth? Was it once part of a bird or animal?
- Provide sorting containers and tell your child that together you will sort the objects as being part of a living creature (e.g., a feather), part of a plant (e.g., a leaf) or from the earth (e.g., a rock).
- Suggest sorting the nature items in other ways, for example by size or by colour.

### Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



**Comfort:** Exploring familiar and unusual natural items in the safety of his home will help your child to feel more comfortable when he makes discoveries out in the world.



**Play:** Touching a variety of nature items, and exploring them closely using a magnifier will enable your child to learn using her senses.



**Teach:** Looking at nature items can teach your child not only the names of the objects and where they are from but also concepts like number, colour, shape, size and texture.

## One is an Ant

This is a **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity that will encourage your child to pretend to be different creatures as they explore a variety of actions. What a great way to make discoveries about other living beings!

### Instructions:

*One is an ant who's oh so small*

*Two's a giraffe who is tall, tall, tall!*

*Three is a fish who swims around...*

*Four is a bunny jumping up and down!*

- Recite the rhyme a few times, demonstrating actions for your child to imitate, (e.g., crouching, reaching, swimming and jumping).
- Your child can join you in saying the words and doing the actions, creating their own movements. This will encourage your child to explore different ways to move in space as they imagine being different animals.
- Take the opportunity to talk to your child about different animals and how they live. Look at books together after the movement activity to help your child learn more about living things.

### Enjoy this more with Comfort, Play & Teach™:



**Comfort:** Children can proudly demonstrate their developing physical skills when they participate in creative movement activities.



**Play:** Pretending to move like different creatures helps children to use their imaginations and explore different ways to move their bodies.



**Teach:** Moving and reciting rhymes helps children to learn the words to poems and to represent what they know about familiar things.

For more information visit [www.investinkids.ca](http://www.investinkids.ca)  
425 Adelaide Street West, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Toronto, Ontario M5V 3C1  
Tel: 416.977.1222 Fax: 416.977.3655 E-mail: [mail@investinkids.ca](mailto:mail@investinkids.ca) Website: [www.investinkids.ca](http://www.investinkids.ca)

Invest in Kids is a registered trademark of Invest in Kids Foundation. All Rights Reserved.  
Comfort, Play & Teach Every Day™ is a trademark of Invest in Kids Foundation. All Rights Reserved.  
Charitable registration no. 83898 5521 RR0001

