

# Ideas for Half-Term Activities – Arts and Crafts, Recipes, Days Out

## Arts and Crafts Ideas

### Fine Motor Octopus Craft – from [buggyandbuddy.com](http://buggyandbuddy.com)

This website has some fantastic ideas for activities and games that are fun and educational for neurotypical and autistic children alike – great for sibling interaction.



#### Materials for the Octopus Craft

- Paper plate
- Single hole punch
- Pipe cleaners
- Markers
- Rigatoni pasta (Some rigatoni is wider than others. If you want your pasta to stay on the pipe cleaners, be sure to use the skinnier rigatoni. If you want different colours, but do not want to dye the rigatoni first, you can cut up coloured plastic straws instead.)

#### Directions for Making the Octopus Craft

1. Draw an octopus face on your paper plate. (Your child might enjoy doing this on his/her own!)
2. Punch eight holes along the bottom rim of the paper plate.
3. Twist one pipe cleaner into each hole.
4. Leave a bowl of colored rigatoni pasta or straws nearby for your child to use.



### Using the Octopus Craft

- Work on sliding the pasta onto each leg of the octopus. You can practice counting or colour matching (i.e. “Let’s make each leg a different colour – this one red, this one blue” etc.) if appropriate to current targets, or on the fine motor threading if not. Also good as an independent play target. The straws/pasta can be removed and then threaded again multiple times.

## Fun with Paint!



- Recreate their favourite characters from a book with a paper plate, colourful paints and cut out ears. Or old egg boxes make great monsters, crocodiles or bears!



- Using a variety of washable paints, create rainbows, unicorns, butterfly or colourful dinosaurs/dragons using fingers, brushes or old sponges.



- Using a potato or other suitable vegetable/fruit help cut out a name or carve a simple image. Dip into paint and print out different pictures onto paper. You can also use old corks which are great for printing and creating wintry landscapes.



- Make simple puppets by placing an old sock over a washing up tube or sturdy cardboard cylinder and decorate with googly eyes, pipe cleaners, felts and pom poms.



## DIY Math Game for Kids – from

### Materials for Maths Game from [buggyandbuddy.com](http://buggyandbuddy.com)

- Three paper plates per child
- Watercolors (optional)
- Red, yellow, and blue crayons
- Sock
- Dried beans
- Rubberband
- Black ribbon (optional)
- Scorecard

### Directions for Making Maths Game

1. First you'll need to make a blue, yellow, and red paper plate for the game. Use watercolors to color the plates as the watercolors dried fairly quickly – or use crayons if working on pre-writing skills. Either method will work.



2. You'll also need one beanbag for the game – make your own with the dried beans and a sock: Fill up a sock with some beans and rubberband the sock closed.



Fold the extra part of the sock over the beanbag part.

Add black ribbon or yarn to give it some color and secure it.



3. Copy the recording sheet (attached: "Press Here Scorecard") so that each child has a scorecard. They can each have their own red, yellow and blue crayons or can share for added social skills practice.

### **How to Play the Tossing Math Game**

1. Start by placing your plates in any formation on the ground. Move away from the plates, and then toss your beanbag towards the plate and see which color it lands on.

2. Color in a dot on your scorecard with the corresponding color crayon

3. Continue doing this until all the dots are filled.

Sometimes you miss all the plates. Just try again!

4. Count up how many red, blue, and yellow dots you got and record the results at the bottom of your score sheet. Which colour has the most? The fewest?

### **Variations**

Give each colored plate a point value. Toss your beanbag 3 times, recording your score for each toss. Add up your final score. Play again and see if you can beat your first score!

Give each colored plate a point value. Play with a friend and see who can get the highest score after 5 tosses!

# Recipes

## Gluten-Free Banana Oat Waffles



This recipe is from the incredible Cookie and Kate website (everything I have made on here has been a huge hit): [www.cookieandkate.com](http://www.cookieandkate.com)

The original recipe calls for only one type of flour: oat flour, which you can make yourself by blitzing some oats in the blender. However, I have it found it to be very versatile and forgiving so after you have made it once or twice and know the consistency it is meant to be, you can easily swap part of the oat flour for other types of gluten-free flour and adjust the milk accordingly (for example, I have used oat flour/almond meal and oat flour/coconut flour – both of which work well but require more milk). I have also found that this recipe makes great pancakes (American-style) if you add more milk to make a slightly runnier batter. If making pancakes, some added blueberries are a huge hit in our house.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 ¼ cups (200 grams) oat flour, certified gluten-free if necessary (you can make your own oat flour by blending oatmeal porridge flakes until fine)
- 3 tablespoons packed coconut sugar or brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons arrowroot starch or cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon baking powder



- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup milk of choice (almond, coconut and oat milk have all worked really well)
- Scant ½ cup melted coconut oil or 7 ½ tablespoons butter, melted
- ¾ cup mashed ripe bananas (about 2 medium)
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- Toppings: sliced bananas and strawberries, apple sauce, maple syrup or honey, nut butter and/or toasted nuts, coconut whipped cream (to make coconut whipped cream, place a can of full-fat coconut milk upside down in the fridge overnight. In the morning, turn the can right side up, open, and drain out the water. Remove the solid cream and whip with an electric mixer).

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the oat flour, sugar, starch, baking powder, salt and cinnamon. Whisk to combine.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk the eggs. Then add the milk, coconut oil or butter, mashed banana and vanilla extract. Whisk until the mixture is thoroughly blended.
3. Pour the liquid mixture into the dry mixture. Stir with a big spoon until combined (the batter will still have a few lumps). Let the batter rest for 10 minutes so the oat flour has time to soak up some of the moisture. (Note: If you are experimenting with different flour combos, do not forget to let the batter rest as coconut flour in particular soaks up a lot of liquid). Plug in your waffle iron to preheat now (if your iron has a heat setting, set it to medium-dark).
4. Once 10 minutes is up, give the batter one more, gentle swirl with your spoon. The batter will be pretty thick, but don't worry! Using a measuring cup, pour batter onto the heated waffle iron, enough to cover the center and most of the central surface area, and close the lid.
5. Wait to check on the waffles until most of the steam has stopped billowing out the sides (this takes 5 to 6 minutes in my waffle maker). Once the waffle is deeply golden and crisp, transfer it to a cooling rack or baking sheet. Don't stack your waffles on top of each other, or they'll lose crispness.

6. If desired, keep your waffles warm by placing them in a 200 degree oven until you're ready to serve. Repeat with remaining batter and serve with desired toppings.
7. If you are making pancakes, add more milk to make the batter slightly thinner and heat a frying pan on medium-high until drops of water "dance" on the frying pan surface (very important – a too-cold frying pan will make your pancakes greasy). Put a small amount of coconut oil in the pan to grease the pan lightly. Then put spoonfuls of the batter onto the pan and cook until bubbles form on the batter. Then flip to brown the other side. You can also fold in fresh blueberries or chocolate chips to the batter before dropping on the griddle/pan.

## **Gluten-free, Dairy-free Oatmeal Raisin Cookies**

This recipe is from the website [yummymummykitchen.com](http://yummymummykitchen.com). Again, anything I have made from Marina has worked a treat. I do not generally use the "flax egg" substitute in Step 2 but simply throw an egg in as we do not have any egg allergies in the house, but have made these cookies both ways and they have worked well. I have also used regular butter rather than a vegan substitute and again, all is good. I tend to add slightly more cinnamon and slightly less sugar so it is a very forgiving recipe. You can also substitute dried cranberries or chocolate chips for the raisins.

### **INGREDIENTS**

- 1 cup oat flour
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon flax meal
- 1/2 cup vegan butter (i.e. Stork)
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup organic cane sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 and 1/2 cups rolled oats (certified gluten-free)
- 1 cup raisins

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together the oat flour, cinnamon, baking soda, and salt. Set aside.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the flax meal and 2 tablespoons of warm water. Set aside.
3. In the bowl of a mixer, beat the butter, brown sugar, and white sugar until light and soft, about 3 minutes. Add the vanilla and flax mixture and beat to incorporate.
4. Slowly mix in the dry ingredients until incorporated. Mix in the oats and raisins.
5. Place the mixer in the refrigerator for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 350 degrees F and line a large cookie sheet with parchment or a silicon liner.
6. Scoop balls of dough onto the prepared cookie sheet and flatten into disks (these cookies will puff up slightly but don't spread much). Bake for 10-12 minutes. Cool for a 5 minutes on the cookie sheet and then transfer to a wire rack.

## Rice cakes with Nut or Sunflower Seed Butter and Fruit Faces

This is just a bit of fun – I have used strawberries, blueberries, orange sections (for a mouth), banana sliced lengthwise for bunny ears.



## Smoothie bowls

We make these instead of ice cream:



Blend together frozen banana and pineapple chunks with fresh berries or mango until they are the consistency of soft serve ice cream. Put in a bowl and top with fruit, sliced nuts or seeds. I will often make two versions of the base and add frozen spinach to one (and no other fruit) to get a bright green version (you cannot taste the spinach) and then another version that is bright orange from the mango or berry coloured. For my son's older sisters I set up toppings as a do-it-yourself sundae bar.

## Watermelon Pizzas

Again, this is a fun interactive activity for kids: slice a mini watermelon into rounds and provide a variety of toppings (we usually have coconut milk yogurt for the "sauce" and then a variety of fruits for toppings. The children decorate their own "pizza" and we sometimes add a drizzle of chocolate sauce or date syrup to finish it off.





## Gluten-free, Dairy-Free Banana Muffins (with nuts or without)



Another great recipe from Marina. I have also substituted homemade apple sauce for the mashed bananas (a scant 1 cup of applesauce = 3 mashed bananas) and then added cinnamon, cloves, ginger and star anise.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups old fashioned oats

- 2 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ¼ tsp salt
- 3 bananas, mashed
- 2 tablespoons flax meal
- ¼ cup melted vegan butter or coconut oil
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 1/2 cup walnut pieces
- 2/3 cup fresh blueberries
- 1/2 cup gluten free granola

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Line a muffin tin with parchment liners. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F.
2. Place the oats in a blender and blend into flour. Add the baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Blend again to combine.
3. In a medium bowl, stir together the mashed bananas, flax meal, butter or coconut oil, vanilla, and maple syrup. Stir the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients just until blended. Fold in the walnuts and blueberries.
4. Spoon the batter into the prepared muffin cups. Sprinkle with granola. Bake until a tester comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Cool slightly and enjoy warm!

## Activities / Days Out

**Eddie Catz Station Road Wimbledon SW19 2LP: [www.eddiecatz.com](http://www.eddiecatz.com)  
SEN evening softplay session for children up to 14 years old and  
siblings**

Softplay, indoor football pitch, disco room  
Monday 18th February 6-7.30pm

**Dimension:** [www.dimensions-uk.org](http://www.dimensions-uk.org)

**Autism friendly cinema screenings**

Work with Odeon, Cineworld, Vue, Showcase and Picturehouse to host autism friendly screenings at over 300 cinemas nationwide.

On Sunday mornings throughout the month, films for all audiences are screened in a sensory friendly and inclusive environment. These adjustments aim to reduce over stimulation and create a welcoming environment.

How to Train your Dragon 3: Sunday 17th February 10.15am

Lego Movie 2: Sunday 24th February 10.15am

Selected Odeon cinemas, check you local Odeon for details

Epsom Odeon's screenings start at 11am.

**Disability Challengers:** [www.disability-challengers.org](http://www.disability-challengers.org)

**Fun Swim at Guildford Spectrum's Leisure pool, Parkway, GU1 1UP**

Leisure pool with wave machine, fountains, slides/ flumes. Much quieter than the regular times.

These sessions are for disabled children/young people and their families/friends. No need to book, just turn up, £2.00 donation per person.

Last Saturday in every month.

Saturday 23rd February 6-7.30pm

**London Wetlands Centre Barnes:** [www.wwt.org.uk](http://www.wwt.org.uk)

**London Puddle jumping Championships!!!**

See who can make the biggest splash from their puddle jump! You will be judged on your enthusiasm and jumping style. Daily winners will be announced throughout half term, super splashers will receive prizes.

Saturday 16th - Sunday 24th February

**Horniman Museum Forest Hill SE23 3PQ:** [www.horniman.ac.uk](http://www.horniman.ac.uk)

**Brick Wonders (Advanced ticket booking required carer goes free)**

Discover amazing wonders from around the world made entirely from lego bricks.

Interactive play areas, build your own models, graffiti wall and big bricks for smaller hands.

From 16th February until October

## **Venture Centre Notting Hill London W10 5YB:**

[www.venturecentre.org.uk](http://www.venturecentre.org.uk)

Adventure playground in Notting Hill that holds a SEN play and stay session every second Sunday in the month for children with SEN and their siblings.

Sunday 24th February 10-4pm

## **Southbank Centre**

Captain Flinn & the Pirate Dinosaurs: The Magic Cutlass

All aboard, me hearties, for a non-stop, action-packed theatrical pirate adventure, with live music, puppetry and dastardly dinosaurs. When Flinn, Pearl and Tom are in the middle of their school play, their old nemesis, Mr T the T-Rex, appears and kidnaps the children forcing them to hunt for the secretive Magic Cutlass – a sword that grants the holder any wish!

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/132796-captain-flinn-pirate-dinosaurs-magic-cutlass-2019>

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133375 Fun DMC 2019 - southbankcentre.co.uk

Get partying with child-friendly hip-hop, funk and disco anthems. Hosted by Spin Doctor (The Doctor's Orders), children are at the heart of this block party. Whether you're the proud parent of a Lil Wayne, a Missy Elliot or a whole crew of Beastie Boys and Wee Papa Girls Rappers, this is the jam for you and yours. Fancy dress is encouraged.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/133375-fun-dmc-2019>

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[Big Moves for Little Groovers - southbankcentre.co.uk](http://southbankcentre.co.uk)

The Movement Factory is an award-winning community dance empire, home to several initiatives working together collectively to give The Movement Factory a unique and revolutionary presence within the UK dance industry.

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/133755-big-moves-little-groovers-2019>

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## **Waterman's Theatre**

<https://www.watermans.org.uk/weekender/feb-half-term/>

Running children's theatre, film screenings, interactive science and music workshops. I have attended events here and found the staff to be very welcoming and inclusive.

## **Walks and Hikes Outside of London**

1. Clivedon Green Walking Trail in Maidenhead – There are toilet facilities but no café.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cliveden/trails/cliveden-green-walking-trail>

2. Egham To Runnymede Circular Walk in Windsor – National Trust run a café on site with good toilet facilities.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/runnymede/trails/egham-to-runnymede-countryside-circular-walk>

3. Osterley Park Stroll in Isleworth – National Trust run a café on site with very good toilet facilities.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/osterley-park-and-house>

4. Windsor Park – from Virginia Water – Excellent café, picnic area and toilet facilities  
<http://www.windsorgreatpark.co.uk/en/experiences/virginia-water>
  
5. Tring Park – Woodland Trust – Really fantastic walks and scenery with a lovely café and toilet facilities.  
<https://tringpark.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>