

#7.1 - Rabbits and Squirrels

Before You Begin

- Review Introduction and Preparation for the Focus Area – More Animals.
- Refer to Developing Weekly Activity Plans for Adventures for Toddlers for information on how to develop your plans.

Big Ideas

Here are some big ideas about rabbits and squirrels that you can help toddlers explore:

- Rabbits have soft fur.
- Rabbits can hop.
- Squirrels can run and they can climb trees.
- Rabbits have short fluffy tails.
- Squirrels have long bushy tails.

Materials to Collect and Make

Featured Books

The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter (+BB)

Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd (+BB)

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd (+BB)

Key: (BB) – Available in Board Book only
(+BB) – Also available in Board Book

Note: See the **Book List** section for additional books that can be used if some of the featured books are unavailable and as supplemental books to read with children

Books to Make

Gray Squirrel, Gray Squirrel, What Do You See? (See Attachment: [Gray Squirrel Book](#))

Storytelling Figures

- Storytelling figures (felt or magnetic) for the book: *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (See Attachment: [The Tale of Peter Rabbit](#))
- Storytelling figures (felt or magnetic) for the book: *Gray Squirrel, Gray Squirrel, What Do You See?* (See Attachment: [Gray Squirrel Book](#))

Additional Materials

- Stuffed rabbit
- Animal cube (See Attachment: [Animal Cube](#))
- Animal match cards (use 2 sets of pictures from Animal Cube)
- Tub of cotton balls with tongs (ice)

Book List

Featured Books:

The Tale of Peter Rabbit by Beatrix Potter

Runaway Bunny by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd (Also available in Spanish)

Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd (Also available in Spanish)

Additional Books:

Guess How Much I Love You by Sam McBratney, illustrated by Anita Jeram

I Spy Little Bunnies, rhymes by Jean Marzollo, photos by Walter Wick

Little White Rabbit by Kevin Henkes

Pat the Bunny by Dorothy Kunhardt

Reading Books with Toddlers

Teacher Note: Review the section in *Curriculum Tips and Techniques on Reading Books with Children*, for suggestions on how to use books with children.

Learning Goals:

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences

EL1.2 Engages in read-alouds and conversations about books and stories

Book: *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter (OT)

First Reading of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

- Collect small stuffed rabbits and place them in a basket.
- Say to children, "I have a basket of rabbits that I am taking to the book area. I'm going to read a story about a rabbit whose name is Peter."
- Invite children to hold the rabbits. Encourage them to describe how the rabbits feel (soft). Which one do they think is Peter Rabbit?
- Show the cover of the book to the children and say, "The name of this book is *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and this is Peter Rabbit."
- Consider telling the story, rather than reading it because of the length.

Teacher Note: If you do not have enough rabbits for each child in the story group, take only one rabbit to the book area. Allow each child a brief time to hold the rabbit, and then put it away until the end of the story.

Retelling of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

Once upon a time there were four little rabbits (point to each rabbit as you say the name); Flopsy, Mopsy, Cotton-tail and Peter. They lived with their Mother, Mrs. Rabbit, under the root of a big tree.

One morning their Mother said, "You may go out and play, but don't go into Mr. McGregor's garden." Flopsy, Mopsy and Cotton-tail went outside and began to pick blackberries.

But Peter ran straight to Mr. McGregor's garden and squeezed under the gate. He began to eat beans, lettuce and radishes. Then Peter met Mr. McGregor who began to chase him. As he was running from Mr. McGregor, Peter lost both of his shoes and then the big buttons on his jacket got caught in a net.

Peter managed to wiggle out of his jacket. He ran into the tool shed and jumped into a water can to hide from Mr. McGregor. Peter sneezed; "Kerchoo" and Mr. McGregor heard him and began to chase him again.

Peter ran and ran and was so tired. He saw a mouse and a cat, but they couldn't help him get out of the garden. Then he saw the gate and squeezed under it and ran home.

Mr. McGregor hung up Peter's jacket and shoes for a scarecrow to scare the birds away. Peter's Mother wondered, "What has Peter done with his jacket and shoes?"

Peter didn't feel very well that night, so his Mother put him to bed with some hot tea. Flopsy, Mopsy and Cotton-tail had bread, milk and blackberries for supper.

Second Reading of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (OT)

- Take a stuffed rabbit to the book area and invite children to join you to read a story about this little rabbit who went into Mr. McGregor's garden.
- Show the children the rabbit and ask them if they remember the rabbit's name.
- Show the cover and read the title.
- Sit the rabbit beside you and explain that the rabbit is going to listen to the story.
- Read or tell the story to the children.
- Follow up the reading by showing the pictures and inviting children to help you tell the story.

Book: *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd (YT & OT)

First Reading of *Goodnight Moon*

- Say to children, "I'm going to the book area and read a story about a little rabbit who is going to sleep."
- Show children who join you the cover of the book and say the title. "The name of the book is *Goodnight Moon*. Can you show me the moon?"
- Read the story with the children, pausing as you read each page to allow children to locate the objects named on each page.

Teacher Note: *You may have to help children with objects such as the old-fashioned telephone and "a bowl of mush." Say to children that mush is like oatmeal.*

Second Reading of *Goodnight Moon*

- Say to children, "I'm going to the book area and read a story about a little rabbit who is going to sleep."
- Show the cover of the book and say the title.
- Invite children to look at the cover and locate the moon, the stars, and the cow jumping over the moon.
- Read a page, omitting an object word, pointing to the object and inviting children to say the word. For example, on page one, read the first two lines and read "And a red ____." Point to the balloon and invite children to say "balloon." On page two, read, "The cow jumped over the ____." and invite children to say "moon."

Third Reading of *Goodnight Moon*

- Invite two or three children to join you in the book area.
- Read the book with children, inviting them to locate the objects on each page.

Teacher Notes:

- *Read the story in a very soft and calm voice to create a sense of relaxation.*
- *This is an excellent book to read with children just before rest time, or even if they are on their cots if they are familiar with the story.*

Book: *Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd (YT & OT)

First Reading of *Runaway Bunny*

- Invite a small group of children to join you in the book area to read a story about a little bunny who runs away from his mother.
- Read the story with the children. Take time to allow children to look at the pictures. On the pages without words, describe to children what the little bunny and his mother are doing and invite them to locate the little bunny.
- Call attention to the short fluffy tail on the bunnies in the story. Invite children to point to the tails.

Second Reading of *Runaway Bunny*

- Invite one or two children to join you in the book area to read a story about a little bunny who runs away from his mother.
- Begin to read the story with the children. On the pages without words invite them to describe what is happening to the little bunny and his mother.

Teacher Note: *Know the children in your group that you think have the attention span to attend to this story. Invite those children to join you in the reading experience. If children do not seem interested in the story, put the book away and bring it out at another time.*

Learning Goals:

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences

EL1.2 Engages in read-alouds and conversations about books and stories

Book: *Gray Squirrel, Gray Squirrel, What Do You See?* (YT & OT)
(See Attachment: [Gray Squirrel Book](#))

How to begin:

- Use the attached cover and related pages to create a book titled *Gray Squirrel, Gray Squirrel, What Do You See?*
- Laminate the pages or put into clear page protectors.
- Bind with metal rings or place in a three-ring binder.
- Take the book with you as you go to the book area and begin to say:

Gray Squirrel
(*Suit action to words*)

Gray squirrel, gray squirrel,
Swish your bushy tail.
Gray squirrel, gray squirrel,
Swish your bushy tail.

Wrinkle up your little nose,
Hold a nut between your toes.
Gray squirrel, gray squirrel,
Swish your bushy tail.

- Show the cover and invite children who join you to name the animal they see on the cover.
- Read the book with the children.
- Review the book by showing each page and inviting children to name the animal on the page, including the color. If they do not say the color, say, "Yes, that's a white rabbit."
- Invite children to predict the animal that comes next.
- Call attention to each animal's tail, especially the short fluffy tail of the rabbit and the long bushy tail of the squirrel.

Language and Literacy Materials and Activities

Learning Goal:

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences

Planned Activity: Storytelling

Storytelling figures (felt or magnetic) for the book: *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

(See Attachment: [The Tale of Peter Rabbit](#)) (OT)

Gray Squirrel, Gray Squirrel, What Do You See? (YT & OT)

(See Attachment: [Gray Squirrel Book](#))

How to begin:

- Make either felt or magnetic storytelling figures for the story.
- Read the book with children several times so that they are familiar with the characters and the order of events.
- Use the storytelling figures to tell the story.
- Involve children in placing figures on the storyboard when you feel they can do this.

Learning Goals:

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (*vocabulary and language comprehension*)

EL1.1 Shows interest in literacy experiences

EL2.1 Notices and manipulates the sounds of language (*rhyme*)

Gray Squirrel

(*Suit action to words*)

Gray squirrel, gray squirrel,

Swish your bushy tail.

Gray squirrel, gray squirrel,

Swish your bushy tail.

Wrinkle up your little nose,
Hold a nut between your toes.

Gray squirrel, gray squirrel,

Swish your bushy tail.

I See Three

(*Hold up 3 fingers as you say the rhyme*)

I see three – one – two – three

Three gray squirrels

Running toward me.

I see three – one – two – three

Three bunny rabbits

Hopping toward me.

Teacher Note: Consider having 3 felt or magnetic figures of squirrels and 3 of bunnies. Add the figures to the storyboard as you say the rhyme with the children. When you feel that children are able to add figures to a board, give each one a figure and have them add theirs to the board as you say the rhyme and indicate which child is to add his or her figure.

Additional Learning Goal:

MT1.1 Demonstrates number sense and an understanding of quantity (*number names and count sequence*)

Nuts for Breakfast

A squirrel from his tree house
Poked out his head.
“It’s time for my breakfast!”
He loudly said.

So he ran down the tree trunk
And scampered all around,
His bushy tail was waving,
His nose was to the ground.

He found the nuts he’d buried.
First one, then two, then three.
He had them for his breakfast,
Then climbed back up the tree.

Teacher Note: Consider having felt or magnetic figures of a squirrel, a tree and three nuts. Add the figures to the storyboard as you say the rhyme with the children.

Additional Learning Goal:

MT1.1 Demonstrates number sense and an understanding of quantity (*number names and count sequence*)

Learning Goal:

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child’s home language)

Planned Activity: Name the Animal (YT & OT)

Materials: Animal Cube (See Attachment: [Animal Cube](#))

How to begin:

- Make an “Animal Cube” as follows:
 - Carefully fill an empty cube shaped tissue box with crumpled newspapers. Use several sheets of paper because this will make the cube more durable.
 - Cover the cube with colored paper.
 - Color, cut apart and glue one animal per side to the cube: squirrel, rabbit, frog, turtle, spider and ladybug
- Help the children name all of the animals on the cube.
- Toss a cube and invite a child to name the animal.
- Continue with each child having a turn to name an animal.
- Involve children in discussing what they know about each animal.

Teacher Note: *The Animal Cube will also be used in the topics that follow: Frogs and Turtles and Bugs and Spiders.*

Learning Goals:

CD3.1 Uses reasoning and planning ahead to solve problems and reach goals (*problem solving*)

LD1.1 Understands and responds to language (in child's home language) (vocabulary and language comprehension, follows directions)

Planned Activity: Match the Animals (YT & OT)

Materials: pairs of animal cards: rabbits, squirrels, turtles, frogs, bugs and spiders
(See Attachment: [Animal Cube](#))

How to begin:

- Make pairs of animal cards: rabbits, squirrels, turtles, frogs, bugs and spiders. Laminate or cover the cards with clear adhesive for durability.
- Take the cards to a table or to the book area and say, "I need help finding the animals that are alike."
- Keep one set of the cards and place the other cards face up on the table or the floor.
- Show one animal card, and invite a child who has joined you to find a card like yours. Say, "Justin, can you find a rabbit just like mine? That's right, Justin, you found a card with a rabbit."
- Continue by inviting other children who have joined you to find a matching card.

Extension: (OT)

- Place all of the cards face up on the table or floor.
- Invite a child to find the two cards that are alike and to name the animal.

Teacher Note: *The Match the Animal cards will also be used in the topics that follow: Frogs and Turtles and Bugs and Spiders.*

Self, Social and Emotional Activities

Learning Goals:

SE1.1 Forms trusting relationships with nurturing adults

SE3.1 Shows awareness of self as unique individual (*sense of identity*)

Planned Activity: Goodnight Rabbit (YT & OT)

Materials: stuffed rabbit in a basket or bag

How to begin:

- Have a goodnight rabbit that visits each child on his or her cot/mat and gives a goodnight kiss.
- Say each child's name as the rabbit gives the child a goodnight kiss: "The rabbit says, 'Goodnight, Sarah'."

Teacher Notes:

- *Avoid withholding the rabbit's kisses from a child who may be having difficulty settling down. The rabbit's kiss is a symbol of love, not a reward for "good" behavior.*
- *Use the Goodnight Rabbit for several weeks. This makes it a special ritual for the children.*

Sensory and Art Materials and Activities

Learning Goals:

PH2.1 Demonstrates fine-motor strength, control, and coordination

CA2.1 Explores, manipulates, creates, and responds to a variety of art media (*exploration of art*)

Planned Activity: Lots of Animals Mural (YT & OT)

Materials: long strip of butcher paper, magazines with pictures of rabbits, squirrels, turtles, frogs, bugs and spiders, glue, small craft sticks for spreading glue

How to begin:

- Cut out pictures of the different animals.
- Sort the pictures of each animal in a separate container so that all of the pictures of squirrels are in one container, rabbits in another, and so forth.
- Place the containers with rabbits and squirrels on the art table. Store the other containers for use during the next two topics: Frogs and Turtles and Bugs and Spiders.
- Label the mural **“Lots of Animals.”**
- Invite children to glue pictures of rabbits and of squirrels to the mural.
- Attach the mural to the wall.
- Invite a child to join you and point to all of the rabbits they see; then all the squirrels they see.

Teacher Note: *Children will have an opportunity to add the additional animals to the mural as they are involved in experiences for the next two Topics: Frogs and Turtles and Bugs and Spiders.*

Learning Goals:

PH2.1 Demonstrates fine-motor strength, control, and coordination (*hand-eye coordination*)

PH2.2 Adjusts grasp and coordinates movements to use tools (*variety of tools*)

Planned Activity: Picking up Cotton Balls (YT & OT)

Materials: 2 unbreakable bowls, 2 pairs of tongs and a bag of cotton balls

How to begin:

- Place 2 unbreakable bowls and 2 pairs of tongs on a low table.
- Scatter about 20 cotton balls on the table near the bowls and tongs.
- Observe to see if toddlers go the table and begin to experiment with the materials. If they do not, introduce the activity by saying, “Anna, use the tongs to pick up the cotton balls and put them in the bowl.”
- Assist children who ask for help by modeling and describing how you are holding the tongs.
- Supervise this activity and, if necessary, set limits for proper use of tongs. Say, for example, “Leandra, use the tongs to pick up the cotton balls.”

Extensions:

- Define space for one child by placing one bowl, one pair of tongs and 10 cotton balls on a tray (8 x 10 inches) or on a vinyl place mat. Repeat this for the second child.
- Count with the older toddlers the number of cotton balls they put in the bowl.

Teacher Note: *As children are involved in this experience, comment on how soft and fluffy the cotton balls are; that they are soft and fluffy like a rabbit’s tail.*

Transition Times

Learning Goal:

CD2.2 Shows flexibility in adjusting thinking and behavior to different contexts (*adjusting behavior to match context*)

Name the Animal Cube

- Toss the animal cube.
- Invite a child to name the animal on the top and go the next activity.
- Continue with this activity, giving each child a turn.

Match the Animals Cards

- Place all of the animal cards face up on the floor.
- Invite two children at a time to find a certain animal and go to the next activity.
- Assist children if they need help finding the animal.

Teacher Note: *Adapt other finger plays previously listed as transitions to move children from one activity or place to another.*

Family Connection and Engagement

- Let families know that for the next few weeks children will be learning about squirrels, rabbits, frogs, turtles, bugs and spiders, and suggest that they involve children in looking for these animals in their yard, neighborhoods and parks.
- Provide families a list of the children's books featured in this Topic and Study and suggest that they check out or purchase one of the books and read with their child.
- Send home a copy of the poem, Gray Squirrel, and suggest that families involve their child in saying the poem.