



Fine Motor Christmas Activities for the classroom and home

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Whether December in your classroom means the end of the school year or the end of the calendar year, it's always fun to work some Christmas-themed activities into the schedule. It's a great way to discuss students' own experiences and expose them to different ways of celebrating, both around the world or in their own community.

Fine motor skills are so important to develop, in pre-school settings, the first 3 years of schooling and beyond! They allow children to build their hand-eye coordination, concentration and finger/hand/arm muscles. All of these skills are needed for pencil grip, using scissors and other general life skills such as buttoning, zipping and using cutlery.

So why not combine fine-motor skills and Christmas?

Following are some ideas for Christmas themed fine motor activities that can be used both in the early years classroom and at home. Most are suitable for small groups or independent work and some can even be used to decorate your classroom and share the festive spirit!

Happy playing and happy Christmas!



Star and dot sticker Christmas trees

Stickers are great for developing fine motor skills. Teachers often have dot and star stickers on hand or they can be easily found while you're doing your regular grocery shopping from bargain shops, supermarkets, newsagents etc. When you combine them with a Christmas tree template, they make a great Christmas activity that can be used in rotations, individually or as a whole class.

You will need:

- Coloured dot or star stickers (or both!)
- Christmas tree template (draw or trace your own, or use one included in this resource).

What to do:

This activity needs little explanation to the students and little supervision, making it a great independent task or small group rotation. You can use a plain tree template or one with stars or spots printed on it. Younger students (kindy or prep) can place their stickers on the correct shape, focusing on accuracy. Older students could draw their own lines across the tree as streamers, then place the stickers along the lines, perhaps even linking to maths by forming patterns.



Pipe cleaner candy canes

Twisting pipe cleaners is another fun, sensory way to develop fine motor skills. Pipe cleaners are often found in classrooms, so this activity can be prepared at the last minute, for fast finishers or if a parent helper cancels. Christmas coloured pipe cleaners can often be ordered through education suppliers or regular multi-colour packs can be found at bargain or craft shops.

You will need:

- 2 pipe cleaners per child per candy cane - red & white, green & white or red & green combinations.

(The pipe cleaners can be pre-cut in half to make smaller candy canes and make them go further, but might be more suited towards the older students.)

What to do:

Students place the pipe cleaners next to each other and twist together. Younger students may need the first twist to be done to start them off. Once they have the desired pattern, students can shape the pipe cleaners into a candy cane, wreath or other shape! Students may be able to make several candy canes if time allows, practising and refining their skills.



Felt Christmas trees

Decorating a felt Christmas tree always proves to be a popular game. They do require pre-making or pre-purchasing but they can be used over and over again and provide so much entertainment! Felt trees can be made as large wall hangings, or A4 individual trees or anywhere in between.

You will need:

- Green felt cut into large or small Christmas tree shapes.
- Stiffened felt sheet for backing the tree (A4 version only).
- Coloured felt cut into small or large decorations (such as stars, baubles, gingerbread people, candy canes etc) or standard shapes.
- Reusable adhesive putty, or ribbon and removable hook, for hanging on the wall or window.

What to do:

Students can decorate the tree creatively by placing the decorations wherever they like. They can be encouraged to create patterns or sort the decorations by colour or shape. This game is full of open-ended opportunities. Large trees could be used individually or in pairs on the wall or as a small group activity if laid on the floor.

A4 trees are more suited to individual work.

Note: Felt may be purchased in both A4 and larger sizes in bargain stores and craft shops. Check out your local suppliers.



Chain decorations

Making chains is an easy way to make a classroom feel festive and is excellent for developing fine motor skills. It is an activity that be started by a student and added to by another, either as part of rotations or at another time. Many classrooms have Link sets that can be used, making this easy to set up at short notice.

You will need:

- Links or chains. Easy! (Classroom sets are available through education suppliers. Small sets can be found in the toy department of many store. Coloured paper clips can be used by older students.)

What to do:

Students join the links to create a chain. This can be done individually and perhaps even joined after a period of time to decorate the classroom or a specific area.

Extension idea:

This activity can be linked to mathematical learning by asking students to focus on creating patterns or by using the chains to measure classroom or personal items (e.g. Can you make a chain that is as long as you? How many links do you need to make a chain as long as your desk? How many links long is your hand/shoe/ruler/book?)



Play dough snowmen

Play dough is such a great activity for building finger and hand strength and best of all it's fun! There are many Christmas-themed play dough variations that can be used for separate activities or as suggestions for open-ended play. One example is making play dough snowmen.

You will need:

- Plain/white play dough (purchase or make your own).
- Rolling pins, cutters etc are not required for snowmen, but may be provided for open-ended play.
- Small buttons and twigs.

What to do:

Students roll different sized balls out of play dough, build them into snowmen and then decorate with buttons and twigs. (Note: younger students may need this demonstrated or require assistance during the activity.)

Extension idea:

Students may be extended to create accessories for their snowman, such as hats, facial features or a carrot-shaped nose, or items like trees or houses to place around them. Play dough snowmen can be linked to Maths by making different numbers of balls into snowmen bodies, giving them specific numbers of buttons, or ordering snowmen by size.



Pom pom Christmas trees

Kids will love this new twist on decorating the Christmas tree and they will be practising fine-motor skills without even knowing! Using tongs or tweezers builds hand strength and gets students ready for their pencil grip... and it's a fun novelty!

You will need:

- Plastic milk bottle lids in different colours arranged in a Christmas tree shape on paper or cardboard. The lids could pre-glued or attached using reusable adhesive putty. Alternatively, provide a template for students to assemble. (*Note: Paint the insides of lids different colours if necessary.*)
- Large container of small or medium pom poms of different colours (sparkly ones make even better decorations!)
- Tongs or plastic tweezers

What to do:

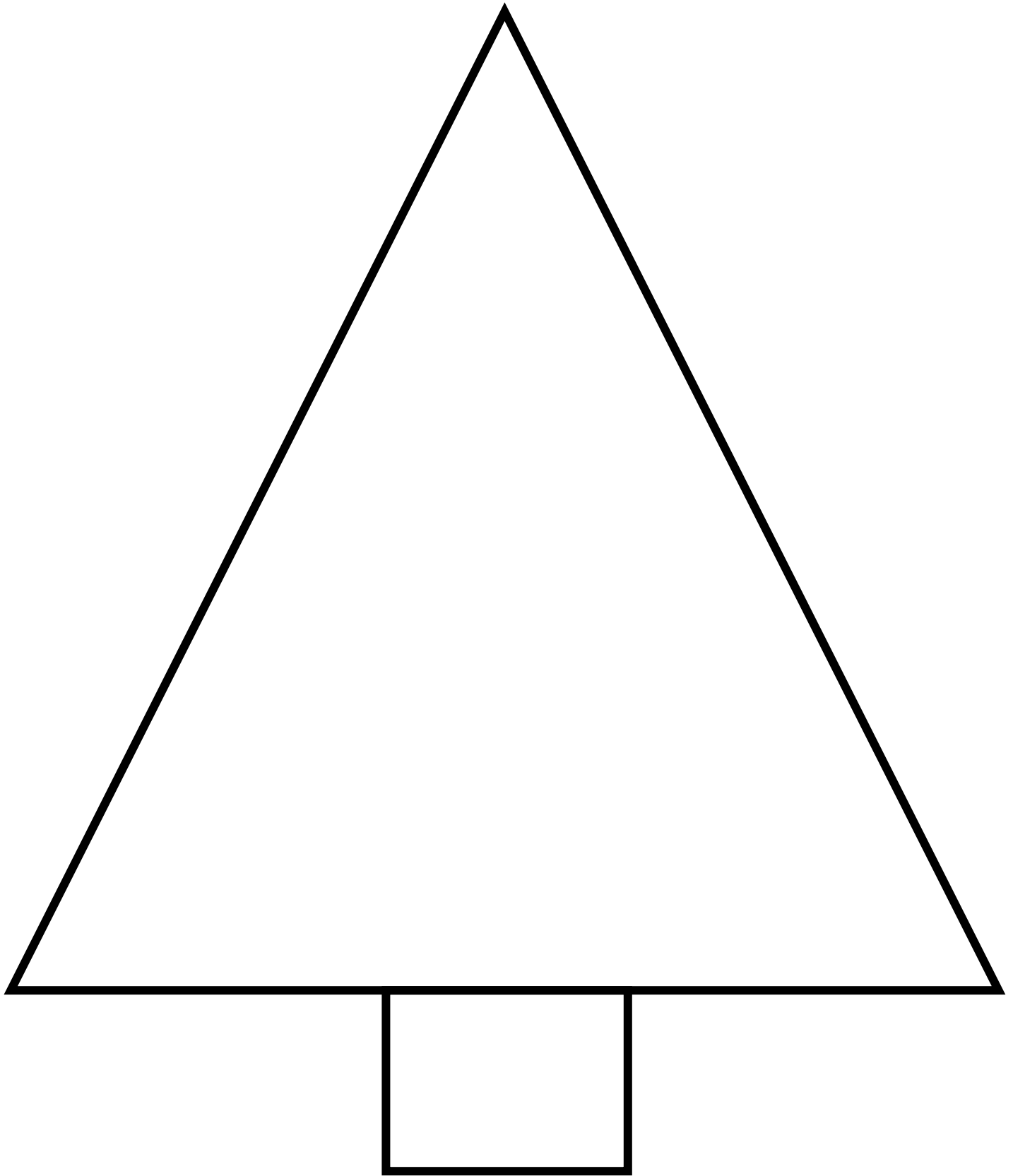
Students use the tweezers to pick up a pom pom and place it in the matching colour lid. They continue until the Christmas tree is fully decorated. The activity can be extended by then doing this in reverse, placing pom poms back in the original container (this is good if used in rotations so it is all ready for the next group).

Note: If you ask students to bring in lids, you should have quite a collection in a week!)

Happy Christmas!



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